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Nick Carter Stories

THE TRAITORS OF THE TROPICS

or Nick Carter's Royal Flush

NICK CARTER STORIES

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THE TRAITORS OF THE TROPICS;

Or, NICK CARTER'S ROYAL FLUSH.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A BOLD PROPOSAL.

"You say he cannot travel to-day, doctor?"

"Impossible, Mr. Carter!"

"He would be in a drawing-room on the Pullman, and every care would be taken to make the journey easy for him."

The surgeon shook his head.

"He would have his own servant, Phillips, to attend him," persisted Nick Carter. "This is Prince Marcos, you know, Doctor Sloane. You've heard of him, and I've explained that it is essential for him to be in the country of which he is the ruler by the eighteenth of this month. He has only five days now."

"I am sorry, but——"

"He could make it in the five days, by continuous traveling," still pressed the detective. "I realize that he would be taking some risk. But when it is considered that the very existence of his country depends on his getting there by a certain date, I doubt whether any one has the moral right to stop him."

Doctor Sloane shrugged his shoulders. He was one of the distinguished surgeons in New York, and he was accustomed to being obeyed. Even a prince was not important enough in his eyes to dispute his professional commands.

"As to the moral right, Mr. Carter," intoned the doctor, in his most impressive manner, "that, it seems to me, is beside the matter. I tell you, as a surgeon, that a man who has just been shot in the chest, and has narrowly escaped a puncture of the pericardium, must lie still for a more or less protracted period, if he intends ever to get up at all."

"I feel quite well," suddenly interposed the man in the bed. "I can travel easily, Mr. Carter. Make the doctor understand that."

"Very well, Mr. Marcos," answered Nick Carter, as he held up a hand of warning to the patient not to talk. "I think the doctor does understand our position."

"I understand that if you let this Mr. Marcos get up to-day, or this week, or next, I will not be responsible for his life," interrupted Doctor Sloane. "His temperature is nearly a hundred and rising, and he is too weak to talk, to say nothing of his getting up."

There could be no doubt that the surgeon spoke the truth. Prince Marcos, ruler of Joyalita, the Caribbean principality, was in bad physical condition.

He had been preparing to go home, to take part in an important gathering of the officers of his government, when somebody had fired a shot at him from ambush as he strolled in the grounds of his temporary home, Crownledge, on the Hudson River, and had brought him down.

If there had been anybody with Prince Marcos when his hidden enemy tried to kill him, the miscreant might have been captured. But the prince was alone. Naturally, nothing could be found of the would-be assassin when the grounds were searched, for it was then half an hour after the shooting, and Marcos was in bed.

Phillips, his valet, had heard the shot, and knowing that the prince's cousin, Prince Miguel, with Don Solado, prime minister of Joyalita, had made attempts on his life before, in New York he had suspected these men again.

Nicholas Carter, the famous detective, had been telephoned for. He had come racing up in his high-powered motor car soon after the eminent surgeon—with the aid of one of much less note, as well as a trained nurse—had extracted the bullet.

Doctor Sloane had just given his decision now that the patient must stay in bed for two weeks at least—perhaps much longer.

To the surgeon's disgust, the patient insisted that he must get up at once. He had to take a long journey into Central America, he said.

Strangely enough, Nicholas Carter, the famous detective —whose knowledge of medicine and surgery was great enough to have made him a successful practitioner if he had cared to follow a doctor's career—had backed up Prince Marcos in his wild purpose.

"I've no doubt that, according to all precedent, a man in my condition should stay in bed," conceded Marcos. "But I shall have to go down to Joyalita at once, nevertheless."

The surgeon turned away, with his favorite shrug.

"Well, I can say no more," he declared, in an offended tone. "I've given you my honest professional opinion. It is more than an opinion—it is a conviction. If you choose to commit suicide, it is no affair of mine."

Doctor Sloane was not accustomed to people flying in his face. So he vouchsafed Prince Marcos merely a curt nod of farewell, and stalked out of the bedchamber.

Nick Carter followed him to the hall and closed the door.

"Really, doctor, I know it is important for Mr. Marcos to go down to Central America at once. He should have started already, and would have done so but for this unfortunate accident."

"Accident?" ejaculated Doctor Sloane, with a smile.

"We will call it that for the present," returned Nick Carter. "Anyhow, the fact that he has enemies who would shoot him down in cold blood in his own home indicates that it is imperative for him to go. If it were not, men would not be trying to kill him to keep him back."

"That may all be," conceded the doctor. "No doubt it is, when you say so, Mr. Carter. But that is entirely outside of my province. I came here to save his life, and I have told you what will happen if he gets up now."

"He has a strong constitution," pleaded Nick Carter.

"Of course he has, or he wouldn't be alive now," snapped Sloane. "But if he moves before next week, at the earliest—well, the consequences be on his own head."

Without waiting for a reply, Doctor Sloane marched out of the house to his motor car, and was gone.

Nick Carter went back to the sick room and gazed thoughtfully at the flushed face and tossing head on the pillow. As he looked, a thought revolved in his mind which he admitted to be audacious, but which would not be banished, no matter how outrageous it might seem.

"What do doctors know about affairs of state?" suddenly burst from the injured man's impatient lips, as he turned his eyes, bright with fever, upon the detective. "If I start on that nine-o'clock train to-night, I can make good connections, and get down to Joyalita in time to beat those wretches. You will help me, Carter, won't you?"

"I will certainly try to bring to justice the men who tried to murder you," replied Nick Carter. "Don Solado, your prime minister of state——"

"A treacherous old rascal!" put in Marcos.

"Of course he is," assented Nick. "And your cousin, Prince Miguel, who would like to step into your shoes as ruler of your country. He and Solado are both interested in preventing your reaching Joyalita. Whether they would kill you to keep you away remains to be seen."

"I am convinced they would. I feel sure that one of them fired that shot at me. Or, if he did not actually do it himself, he hired one of those thugs, who can be procured in any large city, to do it for him."

"It comes to the same thing," remarked Nick Carter.

"But that is nothing, after all," went on Marcos hurriedly. "The thing is that the revolutionary party in Joyalita are to hold a meeting on the eighteenth of this month, at which they will practically give the country into the hands of our neighbor, Carita. That is the scheme. If I am there, I must sign the reply to Carita's proposition, and, of course, it will be in the negative."

"And if you are not there?"

"Then the president of the council, who is a secret enemy of mine—as I have just found out—will sign it for me, and he will accept the other side's proposal."

"It is a difficult situation," murmured Nick.

"Difficult or not, it must be solved," broke in Marcos. "I intend to go. The capital of Joyalita is Penza, and I must be there at twelve noon on the eighteenth."

He forced himself to a sitting posture and threw aside the bedclothes.

"Mr. Marcos!" protested Nick.

"Don't try to stop me, Carter! My mind is made up!"

But Marcos' body was not as strong as his will.

As he swung himself out of bed and put his feet to the floor, the pallor of faintness came over his face, and he would have pitched forward in a heap had not the detective caught him.

Lifting the insensible man upon the bed again, and pulling the clothes over him, Nick Carter applied remedies which soon brought him back to consciousness, although his disappointment was pitiful.

"What shall I do?" he wailed. "What shall I do? The scoundrels have beaten me, after all."

Nick gave him a spoonful of stimulant, and, as the color came back increasingly into his face, Marcos continued:

"I don't care for myself. But it breaks my heart to see my little country sold into bondage for the benefit of a handful of rascals who would sell their own mothers if they got their price. What can I do, Carter?"

He held out his hot hand appealingly to the strong, cool detective at the side of his bed, and Nick Carter, taking the hand in his, resolved to carry out the audacious purpose already referred to, let the result be what it might.

Nick strode up and down the room for some minutes, turning over in his mind the scheme that had come to him. Once he stopped before the mirror on the dresser and contemplated his own face steadily for several seconds.

As he turned away, there was a confident smile softening his resolute lips, and he nodded as if inwardly assenting to some suggestion unheard by anybody but himself.

"Listen to me, your highness!" he said, stopping at the side of Prince Marcos' bed.

"Drop 'your highness,' Carter," begged Marcos impatiently. "Call me 'Mr. Marcos,' if you like, but leave out the royalty. We are in New York, and I am quite content to be a plain 'Mr.' while here. But what were you going to say?"

"Just this," replied the detective, bending over the bed, so that the trained nurse, who had just come into the room, should not overhear. "There is one way in which we can save your country. It will mean trickery—a fraud, if you will."

The trained nurse left the room, and Nick Carter quietly turned the key in the lock.

"What is it?" asked Marcos.

"Look at me. Don't you think many people would say I was Prince Marcos if I declared that to be my name?"

"Of course they would. No one could tell the difference, and——"

Marcos stopped, and a wild expression of hope came into his fever-brightened eyes.

"You mean that you would——" he went on, and stopped again.

"I would go in your place to Penza, in Joyalita, and do for Prince Marcos what his enemies have prevented his doing for himself," declared Nick Carter firmly.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEPARTURE FOR PENZA.

There was no other word spoken for an appreciable space of time. Prince Marcos could hardly comprehend the possibility of the plan, and was silent. Nick waited for him to say something.

"I should think it could not be done if it were any one but you, Carter," were the broken words that came from Marcos at last. "But I can see only success if you undertake the thing."

"There must be success," returned Nick gravely.

"Of course. Now let me tell you what you must do. When I left Joyalita I wore a small mustache. I shaved it off before I got to New York. Will you kindly hand me my coat—or take the small packet of letters, fastened by a band, in the inside pocket? That will be better."

Nick obeyed, and Marcos took from one of the envelopes a photograph of himself as he had appeared before taking off the mustache.

"You see, Carter," he said, "I looked a little different when wearing that. Could you not put one on like that? It would make your disguise absolutely perfect."

"I will do that, of course," answered the detective. "Will you lend me this photograph? I will get a mustache, and make up my face with the photo as a guide. That is a common method with professional actors when they are to represent some well-known personage—such as President Lincoln, Disraeli, or *Taffy*, in 'Trilby.' They generally 'make-up' from a portrait of the original. I can get myself exact, I know."

"You can have the photo. And you'd better take Phillips with you. He will be a great help, because he knows Joyalita and its people as well as I do."

"Certainly. I could hardly undertake it without Phillips," answered the detective. "I intended to ask you for him."

"Who else will you have with you?"

"I shall take my principal assistant, Chick, in the guise of a medical attendant, and my second man, Patrick Garvan, in place of your late servant, Jason, who managed to get burned to death during the last attempt of the gentle Miguel to keep you away from Joyalita."

"So you will have three people with you," observed Marcos. "That will make four in the party, and it ought to be strong enough to throw off Solado and Miguel, if they should try any tricks on you as you go along."

"Which they are likely to do," said Nick.

Marcos fumbled under his pillow and brought out a chamois leather bag which he had worn around his neck under his clothing, but had taken off when his valet had undressed him.

Phillips knew that his employer always had this bag under his pillow. He often had assisted him to remove the cord from his neck without making any comment. Any well-trained valet would do that.

"Here is something you must take, Carter," said Marcos.

He fumbled in the bag, and took out a richly jeweled watch and diamond fob. Laying them on the counterpane, he regarded the fire and luster of the precious stones admiringly.

"This watch is known as the Seal of Gijon," he remarked quietly. "It has been handed down in my family through a dozen generations, and is the insignia of the reigning house of Joyalita. You see that it is old-fashioned in design. But it is an accurate timekeeper, and its value, merely as gold and gems, is several thousand dollars."

"I know that," nodded the detective. "I've seen the watch before, you will remember."

"Yes, I remember. But here is something that perhaps you have not seen," continued Marcos, as he pressed a spring. "This is the great seal of Joyalita, and it must be used on all official documents. You will perceive that it is in the form of a double-headed dragon, with the letter 'J' twisted about it like a rope."

Nick Carter bent over the watch and admired the ingenuity with which the seal—almost as large around as the watch case itself, but fitting just inside—would stand forth when the spring was pressed, so that it could be used on sealing wax.

He put the Seal of Gijon carefully in an inside waistcoat pocket, and went away, after promising to come back before he started on his long journey to Penza, in Joyalita.

It was a quarter to nine that night when two taxicabs arrived at the Grand Central Terminal in New York. Five persons left the cabs and crossed the great concourse, on their way to the express train ready to leave.

Three of the four men in the party carried hand baggage of various descriptions. The fourth was wrapped in a large overcoat, and only his eyes, nose, and mustache could be easily distinguished between the two points of the large upturned collar as he walked along.

He was conversing with a very pretty, dark-eyed girl, expensively dressed and bearing all the marks of good breeding so easily to be distinguished when present, and quickly missed otherwise.

The man in the big overcoat was Nick Carter; the young lady, Miss Claudia Solado, niece of the villainous prime minister of Joyalita, Don Solado, and cousin of Prince Marcos.

Claudia was a warm champion of her Cousin Marcos, and her greatest regret was that Don Solado was the brother of her dead father.

"I am sure you will get there safely, Mr. Carter," she was saying, as they crossed over to the train gate. "Poor Marcos! He would be lost if it were not for you."

"Not a bit of it," laughed the detective. "So long as he has such an earnest and faithful cousin as Miss Claudia, he could not fail to win out at last. Will you see me into the train, so that you can report to him?"

"Yes. If they will let me pass the gate," she answered.

"I'll attend to that," returned the detective confidently. "They will let you through."

So they did. She walked up the platform to the Pullman car by the side of him, talking in low, earnest tones all the way.

Immediately behind came Chick, with a pointed beard, dark spectacles, and carrying a black leather medical case in his gloved hand. In his dark clothing and high hat, he was the very picture of a well-to-do physician, and, when he coughed a sonorous "Hem!" as he passed the gate, was as impressive as Doctor Sloane himself.

Patsy Garvan wore a light check suit and leather leggings, with a cap of the same material as his suit. In his pockets were a pair of handcuffs and the automatic revolver which he always carried when out on business.

Incidentally, it may be said that both Nick Carter and Chick were provided with similar useful implements.

The drawing-room which had been reserved for Mr. Marcos and his physician, "Doctor Fordham," was ready, and Nick Carter and Chick went in at once, accompanied by Claudia.

Patsy Garvan and Phillips were to ride in the Pullman in ordinary seats, and they busied themselves in placing the baggage that had not been stowed in the drawing-room. Everything was done in the regulation manner, and no one could doubt that the wealthy gentleman in the drawing-room was all he appeared to be, with his two servants in attendance.

"You have not seen anything of our friends the enemy, have you, Miss Solado?" asked Nick, when they were shut in.

"I cannot be sure," she answered. "I did not see Miguel or my uncle, Don Solado, anywhere about the station. But I saw one face I thought I recognized—only I know he is dead."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Jason, who used to be Marcos' undervalet."

"Do you think you saw his face?" asked Nick Carter thoughtfully.

"I saw a face like his. But, as you know he is dead, of course I must have been mistaken."

"Of course," agreed Nick. "Did you see what became of this man who looks like Jason?"

"I missed him near the gate. He may be on this train."

"That's possible," put in Chick. "It's a long train, and there might be a score of people on it whom we know without our ever seeing one of them."

"I wish I could come with you, Mr. Carter," said the girl. "But my mother does not want to leave New York just yet. She does not go out much, but she likes to be near the bustle of this big city. It is just a notion, but it is insistent, too. I do not care to leave her, although she would not mind, for both she and I are used to traveling alone."

"You will be safer here, with your mother," returned the detective. "So long as I have Phillips to give me a hint now and then, I shall be able to act the part of your cousin satisfactorily, I am sure. Then, if I need any other kind of help, I have my two assistants, and ——"

The cry of "All aboard!" came echoing along the platform at this moment.

With a hasty "good-by, and thank you, Mr. Carter!" Claudia Solado left the drawing-room and was helped down to the platform by Chick.

In another minute the train was softly gliding away, without noise or fuss, as the electric motor got to work. Claudia was left on the platform watching the red tail lights as they glimmered smaller and smaller, and finally disappeared.

As she walked slowly from the station and entered the taxicab which had been waiting for her, she did not perceive a slim, ratlike-looking young man, hardly out of his teens, who had been watching her, and who was close behind her as she told the driver to take her to Crownledge.

"Seen the prince guy off," muttered the young fellow. "That is all I wanted to know. I'll get up to the boss and hand it to him."

It was a small, subdued-looking sort of hotel, in a side street to which the spy made his way, and asked for Mr. Miguel.

"There he is, on the other side of the lobby," replied the clerk at the desk. "Do you know him when you see him?"

"Sure I know him," was the reply, as the fellow slouched over to Prince Miguel.

"Well, Collins?" was Miguel's greeting. "Did you see Prince Marcos go away?"

"Yes. He's gone, with three other fellows. One of them was the man I'd seen before—his valet, Phillips. I don't know the other two."

"Ah! How did the prince look? Was he sick?"

"Didn't seem so."

"Couldn't you tell?"

"No. He was muffled up in a big overcoat, and you could see only his nose and mustache."

"Mustache? Did he wear a mustache?"

"Yes. It was a little one, but I lamped it all right. He walked along steadily, talking to the girl."

"What girl? Who are you talking about?"

"Miss Solado. At least, that's who you said she was, when you was showing me the people I had to pick up later. She was with this here prince, and she went into the train with him. Afterward she came out, called a taxi, and told the driver to take her to a place in upper Broadway. She said she would show him the house she wanted when she got there."

Collins delivered all this information with the smoothness of one accustomed to making detailed reports, and Miguel knew he had heard all that his spy could tell him.

"You are quite sure Prince Marcos was not seriously hurt?"

"I'll bet on that. He swung his arms as he walked, and you could tell, from the move of him, that he felt pretty good all around. I know how a guy acts when he's been plugged. There ain't nothing wrong with this prince, and you can bet on it."

"That will do, Collins," said Miguel, after a pause, during which he finished the cigarette he had been smoking and lighted another. "Be at your home, so that I can call you up when I want you."

"I'll be there right along as soon as I can get there. It's a regular hotel, even if it does look like a saloon,

and we have a telephone and everything to make a fellow comfortable. So why shouldn't I stay there?"

When Collins had gone, Prince Miguel got up, stretched himself, and walked up and down the lobby, cigarette in mouth, and deeply cogitating.

"Solado was right!" he muttered, between his teeth. "He's a sharp man, is Solado. He knew Marcos was too badly shot to go to Penza just now. Yet a man supposed to be Marcos has gone. I guess I'll call up Marcos' mother from Newport on the long distance, and tell her Marcos has met with an accident. She'll come rushing up to Crownledge to see her son, and if he's still there, in bed, as I believe, why, I shall know what to wire to Solado."

He chuckled as he lighted another cigarette and strolled over to the telephone desk to tell the operator to call up Newport.

CHAPTER III.

A PUZZLE FOR MIGUEL.

There was no train from Newport that night by the time the Princess Laura Marcos, mother of the wounded prince, got the telephone message from Miguel, and she did not feel equal to motoring the distance at night.

By eleven o'clock the next morning, however, she stood in the library at Crownledge, talking to Miguel. He had met her at the station, and though he had not been a welcome visitor at Crownledge heretofore, he had brought her to her home now as a matter of course.

Claudia had met her Aunt Laura at the door, and had said that she was staying at Crownledge to help take care of the gentleman who had been hurt in the grounds at Crownledge.

The princess had wondered why Claudia spoke of her cousin in such a peculiar way. "The gentleman who has been hurt" did not sound as if there were much cousinly affection.

But, then, Claudia Solado had quarreled with Marcos several times, and probably they had had a tiff now. That would account for it.

"Of course," murmured his mother to herself. "I never knew two young people who liked each other who were not always quarreling. That does not mean anything. Still, considering the poor boy is sick——"

Claudia had slipped out of the room, saying she wanted to tell the trained nurse that her patient's mother was coming up.

The nurse had never been told the name of her patient. She had heard him vaguely spoken of as 'Marcos,' but she had caught it as 'Marsh.' Indeed, she had asked Claudia, after the departure of Nick Carter, if that was the name, to which the girl, inspired by a sudden idea, had replied in the affirmative.

Claudia went into the bedchamber, and telling the nurse that a lady had come to visit the patient, went to the bed and bent over her cousin.

"Marcos!"

"Yes?"

"Your mother is here."

"Who sent for her?"

"I don't know. But Miguel is downstairs."

Marcus started up in bed, but, catching the reproving eye of the nurse, he fell back again, and permitting that cool-handed, nerveless person to rearrange the covers. Then he turned to Claudia and whispered:

"How dare that scoundrel come into my home?"

"I'll find that out for you later. But listen to me."

"Go on."

"When your mother comes in, don't recognize her. You are a Mr. Marsh, and you were coming to see Mr. Marcos, who went out of town last night. Do you understand all that?"

"Of course I do. Now that Miguel is here, I know that all kinds of deceit has to be practiced to get the better of him. Well, I'd do anything for the sake of my beloved country. Better get that nurse out of the room."

"She's gone. She won't come back till after the interview. I'll take care of that," the girl assured him.

Now that Claudia had attended to one side of the affair, she had to look after the other. She must find an opportunity to whisper a warning to her Aunt Laura.

She went back to the library and beckoned to her aunt. Miguel was about to walk forward with the princess, but something in Claudia's eye warned her. So she coolly stepped away from him and stood alone by a window, with the girl.

The hint that they wanted to speak to each other confidentially was too positive for Miguel to pretend to misunderstand, although he would have given a great deal to know what they intended to talk about.

So short was the conference, however, that he felt sure nothing of importance had passed between them.

"Do not recognize Marcos, aunt," whispered Claudia. "Beware of Miguel. I'll tell you about it later."

"Who is it in bed, then?"

"It is Marcos. But pretend you don't know him. He is supposed to be a Mr. Marsh."

"I understand."

The Princess Marcos, mother of the ruler of Joyalita, did understand. She was an able, quick-thinking woman of the world, and she had seen enough of diplomacy and statesmanship to make her much more sophisticated than the average woman of mere society.

Claudia led the way up the broad, old-fashioned staircase, followed by Miguel and the princess.

Claudia softly opened the door of the bedchamber, and stood aside to let her Aunt Laura enter.

Miguel followed the princess, and Claudia went in last, closing the door after her.

The only occupants of the room were the three persons who had just entered and the quiet figure in the bed. He held a hand over his face, as if he could not bear even the dim light of the chamber. A white bandage was around his forehead.

"Remember, aunt!" whispered Claudia, in her ear. "Mr. Marsh! You do not know him. Miguel would not believe me, so I have not told him."

The princess walked over to the bed, saying "Marcos! My boy!" As she reached the bedside, she stopped in well-simulated astonishment, and, looking around, asked: "Why, Claudia, who is this gentleman?"

"It is Mr. Marsh. He is a friend of Marcos'. Who did you expect to see?"

"I thought it was Marcos," was the answer.

"Marcos, aunt? Why, how could that be? Marcos went to Joyalita yesterday. He was sorry to go, because he would have liked to stay with Mr. Marsh. As it was,

he gave orders that Mr. Marsh should be carefully attended until able to get up safely.

"I am very sorry, sir," said Marcos' mother, turning again to the bed. "I thought it was my son. But I should not possess natural humanity, if I did not sympathize very heartily with you, even though I have never met you before. I trust you will soon be restored to health."

"Thank you, madam!" returned Marcos quietly.

She gave him a graceful bow and walked toward the door, without even looking back.

What it cost her to do this only she knew. But she had a part to play for the benefit of her beloved son, even though she did not understand why, and she nerved herself to go through it to the end.

As she went out, Miguel looked at the bed. Disheveled, with the water-soaked bandage around his brow to allay the fever and relieve his aching head, Marcos did not look like himself.

"Confound him! I can't swear to him!" muttered Miguel. "Did Marcos go to Joyalita? Did he, or didn't he?"

Outside the sick room the three walked down to the library, where Prince Miguel bowed, and expressed his sorrow to have brought the princess from Newport on a misundertanding. Then he walked out to his taxicab and told the driver to speed downtown as fast as he could.

When Miguel had gone, Laura turned to her aunt with admiration and pleasure shining in her eyes.

"You were splendid, aunt. If Miguel had ever found out that this was really Marcos, he would have known that the person representing him who has gone to Joyalita could not be he. That would have meant all kinds of trouble for Marcos and Joyalita, too."

But before she had finished, the mother was upstairs again, bending over her son and asking him what it all meant.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE ROAD TO JOYALITA.

Four days had passed since Nick Carter, in the character of Prince Marcos, had glided out of the Grand Central Terminal in New York City. He and his three companions were traveling through a mountainous region in Central America. The soft breath of the Caribbean Sea tempered the tropical heat and made the atmosphere ideal.

Nick had purchased a high-powered motor car before leaving the United States. So when he found it desirable to leave the lines of railroads and depend upon the highways, he brought his car into use, and traveled almost as fast—and much more comfortably—than he had in his Pullman car.

Nick Carter drove and Patsy was by his side. As the sun went down behind a range of rugged mountains in the west, and the road became suddenly gloomy, Patsy looked about curiously.

"Gee! Where do we tear off our sleep to-night, chief?" he asked. "Ain't there some town on the map that we can get to before pajama and nightie time? And supper? What about that?"

"Not hungry, are you?" asked Nick, smiling behind his mustache.

"Hungry?" ejaculated Patsy sarcastically. "Why, no, chief! Whatever put that in your head? Didn't I have breakfast, at eight o'clock this morning, and didn't I get rye bread, fossilized beans, and boiled mud that they called coffee? I had almost as much breakfast as I would give to a three-year-old girl. The coffee—gee! that coffee!—fixed me up right away."

"Let's see! What did we do about lunch?" asked Nick, a merry twinkle still in his eye. "Did we have much lunch?"

Patsy actually stood up in the car before he could express his disgust. The occasion called for oratory.

"Lunch!" he howled. "We had a puncture for lunch, and we fed ourselves putting on a new tire and then fixing a stripped gear. Altogether we were three hours hung up on the road. When we got a start at last there was no time to think of eating anything. Where do you think we are now?"

"About thirty miles from a little town I have been in before," was Nick Carter's reply. "We'll get supper and bedrooms there."

"Thirty miles? We ought to make that in half an hour," observed Patsy.

"Not on these roads," corrected Nick. "Sixty miles an hour isn't much when you've got a smooth surface. But along this trail I guess twenty miles will be enough."

"Gee! That means an hour and a half!" grumbled Patsy. "Well, I'll chew on my left boot. It looks a little softer than the other. Unless you'll pull up a minute or two and let me scoop up a handful of sand from the side of the road. With some gasoline to wash it down, that ought to go all right."

Nick Carter did not reply. He knew Patsy Garvan too well to take any notice of his complaints. No doubt the young man was hungry. But let any occasion arise for him to become active, and he would forget his inner wants at once. Having nothing else to do, he grumbled.

Chick laughed in the back of the car at Patsy's comical distress, but sympathized with him, nevertheless.

It was true, as Patsy had intimated, that they had had nothing to eat since breakfast, and it certainly had been an unsatisfactory meal.

They were passing through a region where the population had too little work to do to keep them in health. Like Patsy, they grumbled, in consequence. They cultivated a little corn and a few beans, and lived on the fruits that grew ready to their hands for the remainder. But always they were dissatisfied.

Occasionally a wagon, drawn by mules, would make a trip through these mountains. Then there would be some few purchases, mostly of coffee and tobacco, the money being wages received for farming for the few comparatively wealthy men who had a score or so of acres under cultivation and were too lazy to do the work themselves.

If they had not needed coffee and tobacco, nobody would have worked at all.

At a small farmhouse Nick and his party had stopped for the night. The sight of real money had stimulated the woman of the house, and she had actually given up her own room and another to the four wayfarers.

There had been supper and breakfast after a sort, for which Nick Carter had paid with a liberality that the people considered only right for a royal personage.

They knew of Prince Marcos, they said—although this

was not his country—and they had heard that he was generous, as well as handsome.

When Nick Carter had paid them for the meals and rooms, they were convinced that common report was correct. The husband, wife, with four or five half-naked children, all agreed that Prince Marcos was magnificently free-handed.

"This next town is called Paron, and it is in Carita, which adjoins Joyalita," remarked Nick, in a general way, to his companions.

"Carita is the little country that wants to swallow up Joyalita, isn't it?" asked Chick.

"Yes, sir," answered Phillips, the valet, who had been silent heretofore, although taking a lively interest in the conversation about him. "Representatives of Carita are at Penza now. I hope we shall get there in time to save Joyalita."

"We shall do that, Phillips," promised Nick Carter, without looking around from the steering wheel. "We shall roll into Penza some time in the morning."

"If we don't get there before noon, it will be too late," Phillips reminded him.

"We shall not be late," said Nick shortly.

"And you can bet that when the chief says it that way, it goes," observed Patsy to himself.

Chick had discarded his high hat—which Phillips had bestowed carefully in its own box—and now wore a soft cap, which shaded his eyes. He had been staring out to one side of the road, in silence, with his hand over the visor of the cap, to make his vision better.

"Chief!" he whispered, leaning over the back of the seat. "I think I saw him again just now."

"Where?"

"Riding down the hill, on the other side of that thicket of big trees. There seems to be a road over there where horses can go."

"There is a trail of that kind," answered Nick, steadily driving. "It is not bad for horses, and it is much more direct to Joyalita than this road."

"Then that is how this fellow keeps on cutting off corners," suggested Chick.

"It can easily be done," assented Nick, still looking straight ahead, in the light of the electric headlamps which he had just turned on. "How many times have we seen him now?"

"Three."

"Since when?"

"Last night. He passed the house where we slept. We saw him again while we were fixing up the tire and gears, along the road, and now here he is again," replied Chick.

"You didn't mention the time when we saw the horse standing, with his bridle trailing, in the valley, by the side of a stream," put in Patsy. "We didn't see the man, but he must have been there, all the same."

"That's true," agreed Nick. "Look at him through the glass the next time we catch him in daylight. We ought to have done that before."

"I did do it," announced Chick. "You were busy with the car when we stopped about noon, and I took a good long stare at him across the hood."

"Well? What did he look like? Did you know him?"

"Never saw him before," was Chick's answer. "But I'll know him again. He is a dark fellow, with short hair. He is in a linen suit of light gray, with a belt holding a sword, and a large panama hat. There is a holster, with a pistol in it, hanging to his belt, too."

"Soldier?"

"I don't think so. He hasn't a uniform, and he doesn't carry himself stiff enough."

Nick Carter drove on, thinking, for ten minutes, before he spoke again.

"Sure you don't recognize his face, Chick?" he asked suddenly.

"I couldn't see his face at that distance. I could only make out his general appearance."

"Yet you know his dress is gray?"

Chick looked uncomfortable for a moment. Then he blurted out, half defiantly, as he leaned over the back of the driving seat:

"If a man has on clothes that are not red, yellow, black, or white, what can they be but gray?"

Nick Carter smiled, and Patsy burst into a guffaw that made Chick very indignant.

"Say, Chick! You're the cutest little guesser, when it comes to colors, that ever moseyed down the pike. What was the color of the lunch we had to-day?"

"That will do, Patsy!" gently rebuked Nick Carter. "It does not matter much whether the man's clothes were gray or any other color, so long as we block his game, whatever it may be. Here's the town of Paron that I told you about, and right before us is the hotel."

Nick drove the car into a courtyard and got out, glad to stretch his limbs after his long drive. His three companions were by his side as he looked about for some place to take his car.

It was a rambling sort of shack that Nick had dignified by the name of hotel, but quite evidently the landlord took himself seriously.

He was a fat, greasy, long-haired individual, and he spoke in broken English, or in Spanish, according to the preference of his guests.

Nick Carter had been to this place before, but it was several years previously, and the landlord did not remember him.

This was just as well, since Nick had come now in another character than his own, and he stood quietly by, while Phillips informed the landlord that this was his highness, Prince Marcos, of Joyalita, on his way to Penza.

Phillips spoke Spanish, and instantly there was a voluble conversation between the two, with the landlord protesting that everything in this house, as well as in the whole town, was at the disposal of Prince Marcos.

"He's a liar, your highness," whispered Phillips to Nick Carter, as he drew a little aside. "His name is Mala. He hates Joyalita and everybody in it. We must watch him."

"That's cheerful information," returned Nick. "I remember seeing the fellow when I motored through here a few years ago. But I had very little to do with him then."

"He would be all right to an American coming through in a car," was Phillips' response. "It is the motor cars that have made this village what it is. Many automobiles pass along every week. Before that nothing was here. Bicycles—that's all."

Phillips referred to the useful "bike" in a contemptuous

tone. Evidently he regarded it as not worth any consideration.

Mala came forward, rubbing his hands, and asking, in Spanish, if his highness would condescend to honor his humble house till the morning, and what his highness would be graciously pleased to like for supper.

"In the first place, Mala," broke in Phillips sternly, "you know that in Joyalita the speech is English——"

"Ah! Yes!" interrupted Mala, with an apologetic upward sweep of his palms. "I am stupid. I am a mule."

"A jackass, I should say," remarked Patsy, in an inaudible tone. "I don't like that guy."

"In the next place," went on Phillips, disregarding all interruptions, "you will set forth the best of everything you have, with some good wine in a sealed bottle. Understand?"

"I will open the wine for his highness," protested Mala. "He must not have the trouble——"

"You'll do nothing of the kind," snapped Phillips. "I'll open the bottle. Bring it sealed, or I will not take it from you."

Mala shrugged his shoulders, and pointed to a large open room, in which three lamps, illuminated with American kerosene, were burning. The room had several fairly comfortable chairs, including two rockers and a sofa, with a large mahogany table in the center. It was a curious combination of American civilization and mountain savagery.

Nick Carter saw that Chick and Patsy were looking after the car, putting it under the cover of a tumbledown old shack.

Then he turned toward the room into which the bowing Mala was anxious to usher him.

Nick sat down near a wide-open window, which commanded the road, while Mala went to look after the preparations for supper and to get the sealed bottle of wine for which Phillips had so urgently stipulated.

For five minutes Nick Carter reclined in one of the two comfortable American rockers, his hand before his face, but his eyes peering out between the fingers.

Suddenly he jumped from the chair, ran out of the front door, and crossed the dusty road.

Behind a huge bowlder, one of several which had rolled down from the mountains at different periods, he came across a man, who had been peeping out slyly, watching the detective in the hotel room.

He wore a panama hat and he had a ridiculous sword in his belt.

Nick Carter seized this man by the throat in so strong a grip that he could only gurgle incoherently, as he struggled vainly to escape.

"So you didn't die, after all!" said Nick, with a grim smile.

"Die? Of course not. Who do you think I am?" demanded the man, as the detective slightly released his grip to allow the words to come.

"Who do I *think* you are, my friend?" rejoined Nick Carter. "I *know* who you are, in spite of the mustache you have stuck on your lip to deceive me. "You are Jason, the rascal who was in the employ of Prince Marcos, now trying to get back to his own country in time to save it from ruin."

"My name is not Jason, and I don't know what you are talking about," was the surly response. "I never heard of Prince Marcos. Who are you?"

Before Nick could say anything more, the fellow, realizing that the hold upon him was not so strong as it had been, made a sudden dive and got away.

A mocking laugh came back to the detective. But it was too dark to pursue the man, and Nick went back to the hotel.

"It looks as if I shall have some little work to do before I land in Penza to put my veto on that annexation resolution in the name of Prince Marcos," he murmured, as he lighted a cigar.

CHAPTER V.

A ONE-EYED BEAUTY.

Nothing occurred to disturb the supper which Nick Carter and his two assistants enjoyed later.

Phillips oscillated between the dining room and the kitchen regions, bringing the dishes himself.

He would not trust any one else to do this work, and Nick Carter learned afterward that he had superintended the preparation of all the viands, besides being careful that the quart bottle of red wine served had never been tampered with since its importation from Spain.

"Phillips thinks they are going to dope us, I reckon," observed Patsy, in a whisper, to Chick.

"I shouldn't be surprised if they did try something like that," was Chick's answer. "I suppose you know that Jason was around here to-night, and that he isn't alone."

"Gee! Is that so?"

"It certainly is."

"Does the chief know it?"

"Yes. But he can't show that he knows it. You must not forget that he is Prince Marcos, and princes leave the guarding of their royal persons to their followers," replied Chick solemnly.

"That's all right!" observed Patsy. "We can guard this prince. I'd just like to see this Jason start something."

The bedrooms to which they were shown were on the upper floor. There were three of them, all opening out on a narrow and rather stuffy hall.

Nick Carter, as the guest of honor, in the person of Prince Marcos, was assigned to the room overlooking the dusty road. In the next apartment, which communicated with his own, were bestowed Chick and Patsy. They had separate narrow beds that never were made for a person to run around in.

Phillips was in a smaller chamber at the back.

The door of Nick Carter's room leading to the hall was locked, and a bolt inside was secured. His window had iron bars across it.

There had been a great many brigands in the mountains in times gone by, and it was not considered wise to leave any house unprotected by bars at the windows and strong fastenings on the doors.

This hotel had at one time been the home of a wealthy miner, when gold and platinum had been plentiful in the neighboring mountains.

The valuable ore had gradually been dug out till there was no more in sight, and when the owner of the mines died, the industry died with him.

His home had been empty for several years, and then Mala, seeing that the rush of motor cars gave promise of a paying trade for a hotel, took the house, and had found it fairly profitable for a person of his lazy habits.

Nick Carter was tired from driving the car all day, and he slept soundly during the first few hours of the night.

It was pitch dark when he awoke with a start. He had the curious, indescribable feeling that a stranger was in the room.

Softly he stretched out his hand, to get hold of the automatic pistol in the pocket of his coat that hung on a chair at his bedside.

Instead of getting to his pocket, his hand fell into the grasp of a large hand, with thick fingers, which closed tightly about his own. At the same moment a pillow was pressed against his face, and several men—he could not tell how many—lifted him from his bed.

Not a word was spoken, but it seemed as if the men all knew exactly what they were to do. They carried him noiselessly in the darkness till he felt the cool air of early morning blowing upon him.

He did not yield without a struggle. But there seemed to be so many men that he could not release himself, and continually there was the pressure of the pillow upon his face so that he could hardly breathe.

Down the stairs and out to the open he was carried. The increasing coolness told him he was clear of the house.

He had on only his pajamas, and when he was placed in a motor car, he wondered whether his clothes had been left behind.

Somebody loosened the pillow from his face, so that he could get his breath a little more freely, but it was still kept in place by a rope fastened around his neck. A pair of slippers much too large for him were slipped on his feet.

By this time the car was moving at a fast clip, and from the way it bumped at intervals, he knew he was not on the road by which he had come to this little village, but was hustling along a rough trail, that never had been laid out for motoring.

Nick Carter's thoughts were busy as he rushed through the air. But he possessed the great gift of patience, and since he knew he could not help himself at present, he was content to await developments.

"I wish I had on my clothes, and that I knew whether they have taken my pistol," he muttered behind the pillow. "There is one comfort, I am pretty sure who the rascals are that are doing this. How was it they did not disturb Patsy or Chick?"

He was soon able to answer this question for himself, as he reflected on the incidents immediately preceding their going up to bed.

"I didn't drink any of that fellow Mala's coffee. The other three did. Phillips was watching everything in the kitchen. But it does not take long to slip a few drops of a narcotic into a coffeepot, or even to mix in some powders of the same kind. I guess that was it. Perhaps I am wrong, but I can't account for their sleeping through it all in any other way."

He estimated that he had been traveling for more than an hour, when the car slowed down easily and came to a standstill.

Hardly had it stopped when he was lifted out of the car, the pillow still over his face, and led up a steep path which he found was plentifully strewn with bowlders.

There were so many hands on him, and he could hear the tramping of so many feet, that he judged it would be well to wait a little longer before making the fight for liberty that was in his mind from the first.

When he stopped walking, which was not till he had climbed the rough path for ten or fifteen minutes, he felt a difference in the atmosphere. The breeze ceased, and a dampness crept through him.

The pillow was whisked off, and he put his hands to his eyes in the endeavor to see what was around him.

He was in a cave, lighted only by the daylight that found its way in by a tunnellike entry, and six men stood around.

With the exception of one, whom he knew at once to be his old acquaintance, Jason, they were strangers to him. A second glance told him they were of the brigand type which is by no means uncommon in the wilder parts of Central and South America.

They were roughly dressed, with lightweight calico shirts, high-laced boots, and broad-brimmed hats, which slouched over their evil faces.

Each man had a belt with cartridges and pistol, and there was a rifle in the hands of the individual who seemed to be in command.

This gentleman, who had a long black mustache and a heavy beard of the same hue, and whose beauty had been interfered with by the loss of an eye, glared at Nick Carter sideways through the eye he had still, and grunted in Spanish:

"What's your name?"

"Prince Marcos," replied Nick Carter composedly.

"Is that right, señor?" asked the one-eyed chieftain, swinging around to Jason.

"It is. But the people of Joyalita are not pleased with him. They want him to be punished."

This evidently struck all the rascals as a joke, for they joined in a raucous chorus of mirth which made Nick itch to pass around and give each one a hearty raise with his foot.

Only the fact that he had nothing on his feet but the pair of old slippers that probably belonged to Mala made him doubt the desirability of such a proceeding.

"It is the order of Prince Miguel—who, at the council to-morrow, will be chosen by the people to rule them—that Prince Marcos shall remain in the mountains with you until he sends for him," continued Jason.

"Good! It shall be done," grunted the chieftain. "Prince Miguel is my friend. Tell him he has the word of Gaspara."

The big man slapped himself on his broad chest as he uttered this last name, and Nick would have known from that action, if nothing else, that he was the Gaspara referred to.

"You will not let him escape?" asked Jason, as a sly expression of cunning passed over his humid countenance.

"Gaspara's prisoners never escape," was the reply.

"Then I will go," went on Jason. "I have to report to his highness that you will do what he asks. The clothes of the prisoner are in the car. Will you send one of your men with me to bring them?"

Gaspara motioned to a man who had been standing in the background with two others, and the fellow followed Jason out of the cave.

Nick Carter had been counting the men, and he had found that, including Gaspara—whom his men addressed as *El Capitaine*—there were eight.

The detective had heard of the Gaspara band of mountain robbers, who infested this part of the country, but never had come across them before.

They had attacked American tourists more than once, and thrilling tales of the threats made by the rascals if ransom were not paid had reached New York from time to time.

The detective had taken all these reports with the traditional grain of salt, and had allowed amply for the terror of those who had been captured.

Now that he had come face to face with Gaspara, and had noted his cruel, relentless face, made more hideous by the loss of an eye, he gave more credit to what he had heard about this fellow and his band.

Nick Carter was still reflecting on the crimes he had heard attributed to the Gaspara outfit, when the man who had gone to the car with Jason came back, carrying his clothes.

"Put them on!" commanded Gaspara.

The scoundrel spoke in Spanish, taking it for granted that Nick understood, since he was supposed to be Prince Marcos, who lived in a part-Spanish community.

As a matter of fact, Nick had perfect command of that tongue—as he had of eight or ten others—and he picked up his clothes without a moment of hesitation.

"It will feel good to have a proper pair of soles under my feet, if nothing else," he thought. "These flopping slippers are a nuisance."

In about five minutes he was attired in the habiliments which were supposed to be those of Prince Marcos, including the comfortable motoring cap that was part of the outfit.

Mechanically he put his hands into his coat pockets.

To his joy, and rather surprised, he felt his automatic pistol in one pocket and his silver-plated handcuffs in the other, together with his handkerchief, gloves, and other little things he had carried there before he was made a prisoner.

"Strange they didn't rob me," he muttered. "But, after all, that is not their object, I suppose. What they want is to keep me out of Penza till Prince Miguel and Don Solado, with the remainder of the blackguardly plotters, have signed that paper which gives Joyalita partly to the neighboring country of Carita, and partly to Prince Miguel. It looks as if they would succeed in that, too," he added, "unless I find some way to circumvent my friend here with the odd eye and the tarred-rope mustache."

Perhaps Gaspara surmised that the detective was making uncomplimentary comments on his personal appearance.

He stepped in front of his prisoner, and, transfixing him horribly with his solitary optic, poured out a volume of sputtering Spanish, interspersed with oaths in that language, which Nick would have had difficulty in following had he not been so familiar with the tongue.

"See here, my prince!" snarled Gaspara. "I shall not put ropes on you, or shut you up anywhere. I have no prisons, and I can't spare cords to tie you. But if you walk out of this cave, you will be met at the outside by two of my men."

"Well?" queried Nick, as he paused.

"It is very well," grinned the brigand, showing two rows of white teeth in doing so. "They will cut off your ears."

"Pleasant!" remarked Nick, aloud—without meaning to do so.

"The second time you do it, they will kill you."

"There will be no second time," declared Nick Carter.

Gaspara looked at him as if he did not quite understand what this meant. Then he shrugged his shoulders and stalked heavily away.

He was brought back in a hurry by an involuntary exclamation of dismay from the detective.

"What is it?" he growled.

"I only wanted to ask whether I am to get any breakfast," replied Nick.

"You will have it as soon as the coffee is made," promised Gaspara, as again he moved toward the entrance of the cave.

Nick Carter did want his breakfast. But that was not why he had given vent to his sharp ejaculation.

He had just felt in a certain inside pocket, and missed therefrom an article which was worth more than everything else he carried with him.

The Seal of Gijon had been stolen!

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN THEY WOKE UP.

It was just about the time that Nick Carter discovered the loss of the diamond-incrusted watch and fob which were known collectively as the Seal of Gijon, when Patsy awoke from a sound sleep in Mala's hotel and groaned:

"Gee! How my head aches! And my mouth tastes like the New York subway smells."

He looked across to where Chick was stirring in his narrow bed, and tried to remember where he was.

"Chick!"

"Huh?" responded Chick.

"Why don't you get up?"

"What time is it?" came the drowsy response.

Patsy did not answer. He was gradually getting his thoughts together, and he determined that this was not like Chick's ordinary demeanor in the morning, no matter how late he might have retired the night before.

"Chick!"

"All right!"

It was not Chick's real voice that responded, but a muffled echo of his usual incisive tones.

"What's biting him?" muttered Patsy. "Is he going nutty?"

Patsy Garvan hoisted himself out of bed, and when his head had ceased swimming—at least to some extent—he walked over to Chick and gave his shoulder a rude yank.

Chick sat up, rubbing his eyes and pressing his two hands to the back of his head alternately.

"Sick?" asked Patsy.

"I feel pretty raw this morning," replied Chick, shaking himself.

"Raw?" echoed Patsy. "I feel as if it would take a week's cooking to make me fit for the table."

"What's it all about?" mumbled Chick.

"Something has slipped a cog and put a kink in our differential," answered Patsy. "We are not in New York, old man. This is the country of the Caribbean Sea, and all the goodness has been drained out of it by the Panama Canal. Get up!"

"All right!"

Chick rolled out and stretched his arms, while Patsy softly opened the door of Nick Carter's room.

"Hello! The chief is up!" exclaimed Patsy. "Wonder he didn't call us."

He opened the door into the hall—only to meet Phillips, who had his hand up to knock. He looked heavy and disgruntled, like the other two.

Before Patsy could speak, the valet pushed him gently back into the room and shut the door.

"We should not have drunk that coffee," began Phillips. "Let me see how the prince is."

He looked into Nick Carter's bedroom and started as he saw that he was not there. Then he slipped over to the bed and examined it carefully about half a minute.

With a low exclamation he picked up from the bedclothing a small meerschaum cigarette holder and took it over to the window to look at it closer.

"What have you got there?" asked Chick.

Phillips put the article into Chick's hand and shrugged his shoulders. Chick passed the holder to Patsy.

"Whose is it?" asked Patsy. "It's an old-timer, all right."

"Jason!"

Phillips dropped this name from his lips as if it explained everything that needed to be known. Then he turned to the bed. It showed plainly that it had been slept in, but it was tumbled in such a manner as to suggest that its occupant had got up in a hurry.

Chick also gazed at the bed, while the habit of deduction, which had been emphasized in him by the admonitions of Nick Carter, caused him to note every little detail, no matter how unimportant it might appear to be at first glance.

"How many pillows were there on this bed last night, Phillips?" he asked abruptly.

"Two."

"Sure?"

"Quite sure, doctor," replied Phillips, who never forgot that Chick was supposed to be a Doctor Fordham on this trip.

"One of them is missing."

Phillips looked about the room, under the bed, behind the shabby dresser, and in out-of-the-way corners. Then he gazed steadily at Chick and nodded his head as if he had come to an indubitable conclusion.

"Jason must have taken it," he said. "He has been near us for a day. Prince Marcos caught him last night, opposite the hotel, but Jason got away. I will go and see about the motor car. Will you have breakfast first?"

"Breakfast nothing!" snapped Patsy. "I wouldn't dare to take anything here again."

"I have made some coffee that I know is right," was Phillips' quiet announcement. "I was sick, and I went downstairs to get some water from the well. Then I felt better, and, as there was no one else in the kitchen, I made some coffee on the fire and brought it up in a pitcher. See."

He led the two detectives into his own room, and showed them a pitcher of hot coffee, with two of the heavy white-stone mugs used in that region, some thick slices of rye bread, a goodly sized cube of butter, and a table knife.

Patsy chuckled as he put his face above the pitcher of coffee and allowed the grateful aroma to steam up into his nose.

"You're a dandy, Phil!" he exclaimed. "There's even a paper of sugar and cream in the coffee. Here's 'how,' fellows!"

It was an axiom with Patsy Garvan that a good thing should be grabbed quickly wherever it was found. So he poured out half a mug of the coffee, stirred in some sugar with the handle of the knife, and threw it down his throat with a jerk.

"Have some, Chick?"

Patsy acted as host to his comrade, while Phillips gazed at them with stony complacency and waited for them to say something about their missing chief.

It must not be supposed that either Chick or Patsy had for a moment lost sight of the fact that the disappearance of Nick Carter proved that the enemies of Prince Marcos were close on their trail.

They drank their coffee and disposed of some of the bread and butter, because they knew they could not do effective work unless they kept up their strength.

But their discussion of the case went on between mouthfuls, and with such effect that they were ready to start in pursuit of the men who had spirited away their leader even before they had finished breakfast.

"Phillips says our motor car is still in the shed, where it was put last night," observed Chick.

"I heard him," answered Patsy, from the depths of his coffee mug. "He says it is dirtier than when we came in."

"Been used in the night."

"We must have had dust on it when we got here," suggested Patsy. "The road we covered wasn't any polished hard-wood floor, Chick. Don't forget that, old man!"

"I know. We had dust on everything when we rolled into the yard below. Only it happens that Phillips wiped it all off with cloths, a wet sponge, and chamois polisher," returned Chick.

"Yes," put in Phillips respectfully. "I knew the car would not run well if it were not cleaned. Besides, we expect to run into Penza to-day."

"You mean, we *did* expect to do it," remarked Patsy significantly.

"We shall do so," said Chick, with a reproachful glance at his friend. "Unless you don't feel inclined to go after the chief and bring him back in spite of anything and anybody."

Patsy's face worked convulsively and his eyes blazed. For a moment he was inclined to let fly at his fellow worker, much as he liked him.

He controlled himself, but the tones in which, the next instant, he addressed Chick, were as sharp and cold as xero-made icicles.

"If anybody in the world except you or the chief had handed that to me, Chick," he said, "I'd have had to tear into him if I knew I was going to be licked to a standstill in the first round."

"I beg your pardon, Patsy!" interrupted Chick. "I didn't mean——"

"To think that you, Chickering Carter, would ever say that to me," went on Patsy, his voice trembling. "Have I ever held back? Don't you think I care as much about the chief as anybody? Why, I'd buck a charge of the Light Brigade for him, and chew up a thirteen-inch gun afterward, just to prove that I was with him first, last, and all the time. Gee! Chick! You've hurt me where I live! I'm sore, and I can't help it."

It did not take Chick more than thirty seconds to placate Patsy, but that was only because there was no time to be wasted in sentimentality. If there had been

plenty of leisure, Patsy would have had to be coaxed and apologized to for half an hour.

That anybody should intimate, ever so indirectly, that he was not loyal to Nick Carter to the backbone, was something Patsy could not stand. When he said he was "sore," he told only the truth. His feelings were rasped worse than they had been for many a long day.

So taken up had Patsy been with the injustice of Chick's remarks that he had almost lost sight of the work before him. He was brought to himself by the sudden reappearance in the room of Phillips.

"The motor car is ready, sir," announced Phillips, in the same well-modulated tone in which he would have said "Dinner is served, sir."

They went downstairs, without seeing anybody about the place. Mala was not visible, and he had no assistants except his wife, who was hidden in the scullery most of the time.

Chick spent about ten minutes in the dusty roadway before he climbed into the car.

"Which way are we going, Chick?" asked Patsy, as he took his place by the side of his comrade, who was in the driver's seat.

"The marks of our wheels show that the car came down the side road leading over the mountains," ventured Phillips.

"I know that," returned Chick. "I have been looking things over. We have a patch on one of our hind tires, and it shows quite plainly in the dust. Jump in."

When Phillips had taken his seat in the back of the machine, Chick turned into the side road—which ran up a rather steep hill—and opened the throttle wider.

"I see old Mala peeping out of a lower window at the corner of a blind," observed Patsy. "The old rip thinks we don't get on to him. Gee! I'd like to make over his ugly face!"

"Jason is by his side," put in Phillips, with his usual coolness.

"I'll attend to Jason the next time I meet him," called out Chick, over his shoulder. "Where will this road take us, Phillips?"

"Anywhere," was the rather unsatisfying answer. "It depends on how far you go."

CHAPTER VII.

THE TRAIL TO THE CAVE.

The sun was well up, and the whole rugged landscape began to seethe under its direct, unshadowed rays, when Chick, after an hour's run, suddenly stopped the car.

They had been making good time, even though it was mostly uphill.

All three occupants developed caution now, as they felt instinctively that they were entering a zone of danger.

Chick had been thinking steadily—while he guided the big car with the instinctive skill of a good driver—and he had come to the conclusion that his chief had been inveigled into the depths of this desolate country, to keep him away till it would be too late for Marcos to save his beloved Joyalita.

Once Chick had talked over his shoulder to Phillips for several minutes. The result of that conversation had enabled him to lay out a plan which might or might not be successful, but which, at all events, would be something definite to work on.

"Gaspara!" had been Phillips' reply to his question as to whether there were any notorious bad men in these mountains.

Further questioning had brought out that Gaspara was the leader of a gang of brigands, consisting of eight or nine rascals who had come together when they all worked on the construction of the Panama Canal, and who had decided that they could make more money, as well as enjoy the freedom they liked by infesting the automobile highways up and down the Caribbean coast.

"They have their headquarters somewhere in the mountains," explained Phillips. "But they go a long way when they hear of any party of tourists that they think they can pick up, or some wagons with valuable freight."

"I know the kind of men," was Chick's response. "Have they horses?"

"Sometimes! They use mules and automobiles, too. All stolen. When they want a horse or motor car, they just go somewhere and pick it up."

"Free and easy, eh?" put in Patsy. "They're the real 'I-should-worry' citizens. The only thing against it, I should think, is that they'll be shot or hanged at last."

When Chick stopped he was on a narrow plateau at the top of a long hill up which he had been climbing for fifteen minutes. Just ahead of him was a curve and then another hill.

He ran the car under the shelter of the overhanging rocks, and moved to the edge of the flat surface to see what was beyond.

He had to walk about a hundred feet. Then he drew back instinctively. He was on the edge of a sheer descent of about five hundred feet. The road broke off as sharply as if it had been cut down with a gigantic cheese knife.

"Bad place to drive a car, Chick!" observed Patsy, who had come along behind him. "I'd keep well in against the wall, if I were you."

"That's what I have done, Patsy," was the short reply. "See that your gun is all right."

"Of course it's all right," answered Patsy. "But, why the reminder?"

"Look!"

Chick had dropped to one knee behind one of the huge bowlders that were thickly strewn about, and Patsy, taking the hint, dropped also, as he followed the direction of his comrade's pointing finger.

"I can't see anything but a steep hill and something black at the top," declared Patsy.

Chick drew from a pocket the powerful field glass belonging to the motor car, and which he had taken out of its case when he left the machine.

Through the glass he took a long survey of the hill and what Patsy had called "something black."

"I thought I wasn't mistaken," observed Chick, taking the glass from his eyes. "I didn't need the glass. That black something is the opening of a cave. Outside it you can see, with the glass, there is a fire burning. The smoke stretches across the sky for miles, I should think. You see, the wind is blowing away from us, or the smoke would blow right over our heads."

"We shall have to curve right around this deep valley to get there," muttered Patsy. "But I reckon that's where we're likely to find the chief. Let's ask Phillips if he knows what's in that cave."

Phillips was asked, but he could not say positively. He

knew that Gaspara and his gang often took up their habitation in caves in the mountains. But they were a migratory lot, and seldom could be found in one place longer than a few weeks at a time—often only a few days.

"The trouble is they may see the automobile when we get near," mused Chick. "Still, I think we can go almost to the bottom of their hill without showing ourselves."

They all got into the car, and Chick saw that he would be sheltered from the view of people at the mouth of the cave until he would be near enough to leave the car and pursue the rest of the way on foot.

He had made up his mind that he would find Nick Carter there. Every sign pointed to the likelihood of Gaspara having taken up his quarters on that hill, and knowing that he was willing to undertake any job if paid enough for it, there seemed no reasonable doubt that he had consented to help out the plotters of Joyalita by holding prisoner the supposed Prince Marcos.

"Here's where we shall have to get out," said Chick, as he pulled the machine to the side of the road. "The hill begins just around that bend and winds up over our heads."

There was an overhanging shelf of rock which made a safe place for the car. On either side of it, the hill ran down straight from above, breaking off precipitously some ten yards at the other side of the roadway.

The drop here was only about fifty feet, but that would be quite enough to jolt anybody who might happen to fall over, as Patsy sagely remarked.

"What's the game now?" he asked, looking at Chick.

"To get up that hill under cover as well as we can, and rush the cave," returned Chick coolly.

"Do you think they are all in there?" asked Patsy, just as calmly.

"No. I have seen six of them go out and move up the hill at the back of the cave. Suppose that there are nine in the gang, we shall have to meet only three. If the number is eight, it will be two. We can depend on the chief to help when we get the ropes off him. I suppose they have him bound."

"That's so," assented Patsy. "I guess there ain't much doubt that we shall find him there."

"None at all," rejoined Chick. "Haven't you been watching the trail?"

"Yes. I've seen that patch on the hind tire marked in the mud once in a while. But there has been so much bare stone to go over, where no tracks show, that I have got mixed up."

"I haven't," declared Chick quietly. "I saw the patch a few yards back, and there is another in the road right ahead of us. We shall have so easy a time picking up that trail that it would be a disgrace if we lost it."

They followed the trail to the foot of the winding hill. Then they halted, and Chick told Phillips to remain where he was while they went up to find out what might be in the cave.

"Wouldn't it be better for Phillips to get to the car and have it all ready to make a jump when we get there?" suggested Patsy.

"You're right," agreed Chick. "Do that, Phillips."

"Very good, Doctor Fordham," was the reply.

"Doctor Fordham?" exclaimed Patsy, mystified for a moment. "Oh, yes. I'd forgotten your name, doctor," he added, with a grin.

"Don't forget it when there happen to be strangers around, Patsy," warned Chick, as he began to ascend the hill—bent over, to make himself as inconspicuous as possible.

They had gone about halfway up the hill, to where there was a sharp turn, when a shower of rocks came whirling down, bouncing from one side to the other, and compelling Chick and Patsy to skip about nimbly to avoid them.

"What the blazes?" blurted out Patsy.

"Keep quiet!" came from Chick.

More rocks, none of them very big, but so plentiful that it was impossible to dodge them all. Then, hatless and with hair flying, there shot around the corner—Nick Carter!

"Run, boys!" he called out, rather breathlessly. "They're coming."

"How many?" inquired Patsy, as he ran to the side of his chief and kept step with him going down the hill.

"Three!"

"Gee! That's easy!"

Patsy stopped short and leveled his revolver at the jutting rock around which he expected to see a man coming.

He was not disappointed. One of Gaspara's gang stumbled into view. He had hardly done so when there came two cracks from Patsy's revolver, and the man pitched on his face and rolled over.

"Thought I'd get him," observed Patsy contentedly. "Are there any more, chief?"

"Two followed me," answered Nick Carter. "But keep on. You have the motor car, I suppose, Chick?"

"Yes."

"All right! Then we can get away. Have you seen that fellow Jason?"

"No. But we've found tracks of him," answered Patsy.

The three were running at top speed, talking jerkily as they moved along.

"Where's those other two men?" asked Patsy, glancing over his shoulder.

No other man had come into view since the fall of the one shot by Patsy. They had evidently feared a dangerous ambush.

Even if they were bandits, they had some respect for their lives.

"They are holding back," observed Chick. "But there are more than three, aren't there, chief?"

"Yes. Six more. But they went out an hour ago. I have been watching a chance to make a rush ever since. The moment seemed to come at last, and I made a bolt for it."

"Bully!" broke out Patsy, in uncontrollable admiration.

"Did they shoot at you?" asked Chick.

"I didn't give them a chance," was Nick's reply. "I knocked two of them down, with right and left-handers, and the third was stooping over the fire, with his back to me."

"I'd have given a year's pay to see it," declared Patsy enthusiastically. "There's the car!"

Indeed, the motor car was ready to start, under the sheltering rock. The ever-watchful Phillips stood at the side, with both doors open, ready to close them with a snap as soon as the three detectives were in their places.

Phillips never allowed himself to betray surprise. So he took the coming of Nick Carter quite as a matter of course, and never even raised his respectable, well-trained eyebrows as Nick jumped in and took the wheel.

The next moment Phillips was sitting by the side of Patsy, while Chick was at Nick's right hand, and the car began to surge along the narrow pathway, with the throttle well open.

CHAPTER VIII.

A RACE WITH A ROCK.

The car that Nick Carter drove was good for a mile a minute on any sort of road. He did not push it to anything like that speed now, with a yawning precipice only a few yards away from him on one side, and numbers of stones, gaps, and rough places under the wheels.

He moved at a good, comfortable pace, however, for he knew that the six bandits who had left the cave could not be far away, and that they would start in pursuit as soon as Gaspara knew what had happened.

"Gaspara was away when you got out, I suppose?" asked Chick.

"Yes. If he had been there, it would not have been possible to escape at all, I think."

"We'll get him later, I suppose?"

"If it seems worth while," replied Nick, letting out an extra link on the speed of the automobile.

"We'll make the little town of Paron, where Mala is, in about an hour, even at this speed," observed Patsy, settling back comfortably in his seat. "Shall we have time to give Mala his, chief?"

"I do not expect to have leisure for Mala," returned Nick Carter. "My business now is to get to Penza in as short a time as possible."

"This piece of road we are reaching now is in full view of the hill where the cave is," observed Chick.

"I see it is. We'll go through in a hurry."

Nick Carter opened the throttle still wider, and the great machine leaped forward like a mettlesome horse that had been spurred.

"Gee! We're in the open now, for fair!" shouted Patsy.

"There's the rest of the gang up there," added Chick.

"They are getting ready to shoot," remarked Phillips.

They could hear the distant crack of rifle shots, and they could make out the heads of the bandits as they lay behind a ridge and took as careful aim at the automobile as they could.

But Nick Carter had seen their intention, and he realized that there was one chance to dodge the rifle bullets, and only one.

He took that chance when he speeded up the machine to about fifty miles an hour.

The rough road bounced the car up in the air, and always it was even betting whether it would come down right side up or not.

"Gentle Christmas!" muttered Patsy. "This is some traveling! I believe my back teeth have been jolted up into the parting of my hair. Let her go! I can stand it if the rest can! But I'll need new suspender buttons when we do stop."

The bullets snored over their heads, the motor car being hidden by a bluff that ran for a considerable distance along the side of the road, just high enough to protect them.

"We'll make it all right," predicted Chick, gazing ahead.

"We have a long stretch where there is no protection—or very little—after we get away from this bluff," remarked Nick Carter. "Still, I doubt if they can get our range at that distance."

It appeared that the rascals could not get the range, for when, a few minutes afterward, the detective had run the car past the bluff and was tearing away along the path faster than was quite safe—considering that there was a precipice along one side over which an automobile might easily tip if the driver were careless for a fraction of a second or anything went wrong with the steering gear—a volley was discharged on the hill far above without one of the bullets coming anywhere near the car.

"Glory!" yelled Patsy. "There's nothing to it! We've got 'em licked to a frazzle! Open her up, chief! This car for Penza and Joyalita! Watch your step! Don't get off the car backward! Transfer at the border line without another fare! Wow! Who-o-op!"

Patsy liked to cut loose whenever there was an excuse for a demonstration, and he felt that this was one.

Nick Carter smiled at his assistant's enthusiasm, but never took his mind off his car.

"Are they getting ready to fire again, Chick?" he asked.

"Don't seem to be. They're racing along on their horses, keeping up with us or trying to get ahead."

"Oh! They have horses, eh?"

"Yes."

"Getting in front of us?"

"Looks like it."

"There's no way they can ride down and stop us, is there?"

"I don't think so," answered Chick.

"There is no way, sir," suddenly interposed Phillips. "Begging your pardon, your highness."

"Gee! What is there to beg his pardon about, Phillips? You told him the truth, I reckon?"

"Yes. Of course," replied Phillips.

"Well, the only time to beg his pardon would be when you lied to him, that's all," jerked out Patsy.

Nick Carter permitted himself a hasty glance up the long, rolling hill on his left. He could see, sharply outlined against the sky, the figures of six men on horseback, tearing along at full gallop, and some little distance ahead of the car.

"I should like to know what their game is," he muttered.

Chick overheard, but he could not offer any explanation, so he held his peace.

Nick was going as fast as he dared with the car, and now, as he came to a more difficult part of the road, on account of its unevenness and the many stones strewn along, he reduced the speed materially.

"Say, chief!" called out Patsy. "We're stopping!"

"Keep quiet!" put in Chick. "You don't want to go over the edge, do you?"

Patsy did not reply, although, in his heart, he would have been willing to take a chance of that, rather than let the horsemen on the brow of the big hill make such good time against them.

For some time the car rolled on at a comfortable speed of twenty miles an hour, or thereabouts, and Nick Carter was taking it a little easier with the relaxing of the strain at the wheel.

Fast driving in an automobile is trying on the nervous system, as well as the muscles, and rest comes in proportion to the less number of miles per hour.

"Those fellows have gone, it seems!" remarked Patsy. "Guess they've given it up!"

The horsemen were, indeed, out of sight. They had not been visible for at least ten minutes.

Either a good horse or an automobile can travel a considerable distance in that period of time.

"Do you suppose they have given it up, chief?" asked Chick, in a low tone.

"I do not," was Nick Carter's positive reply. "I've met Gaspara, and I am sure he is not the man to yield until he is sure he can't go any farther. We'll hear from him again before we get to Paron."

The prediction of the famous detective was verified within another five minutes.

They had reached a place where the path narrowed, so that they were much closer to the sharp edge of the abyss on their right than they had been. At the same time, bowlders at the foot of the slope on the left interfered with the car there.

Nick Carter was endeavoring to steer a safe middle course, and at the same time not reduce the speed too much, when a shout of warning and alarm from Patsy made him throttle down the power, throw in the neutral clutch, and jam his foot on the brake.

The car came to a dead stop.

Chick swung around to see what the trouble was, and instantly yelled to Nick to go on.

"Hustle for all there is in her!" roared Chick.

His manner was so wild, that Nick Carter turned involuntarily to the left and look up the mountain.

What he saw induced him to open up the engine and send the machine jumping ahead as if it had been shot out of a mortar.

"Can we make it?" cried Chick, wildly excited.

Nick Carter did not answer in words. All he did was to try for a little more speed.

On the brow of the hill—with the six men who had been riding horseback, but who now were afoot, surrounding it—was a bowlder that the detective estimated must weigh not less than four or five hundred pounds.

The bandits obviously had uprooted this enormous mass of granite from the earth, and now were balancing it on the very edge of the hill, preparatory to sending it hurtling down the slope.

It was clear now why the rascals had been riding so fast, to get ahead of the automobile. They intended to crush the machine and the men in it, without giving the victims more than the barest fighting chance.

There was no room to stop and let the quarter-ton mass bound in front of them. Yet, if they tried to get past first, they might be caught squarely in the middle!

It was a matter of close calculation, and, owing to the inequalities on the hill, as well as the many little causes that might turn the immense missile one way or the other, this calculation could not be made with any certainty.

In case of doubt, it is usually the part of wisdom to go on, instead of hanging back, and Nick Carter drove ahead.

"Gee! She's a beaut!" exclaimed Patsy. "She looks about as big as a haystack, and a durned sight more dangerous! Straight for us, chief! That's how she's coming!"

Patsy was holding to the side of the car with a convulsive clutch, as he watched the gigantic stone skipping down the mountain.

It was a ticklish moment.

Nick Carter's eyes were on the road in front. He had the wheel in a firm grasp, and the whole machinery of the car was under perfect control.

But, with all that, unless he enjoyed a little, common, everyday, bull luck, he did not believe he could get away from the insensate foe tearing toward him like a thing possessed.

"We *may* make it!" observed Chick. "But she's zigzagging in such a crazy fashion that you cannot tell what she is going to do. Can you open her up a little more?"

The motor car was tearing along faster than sixty miles an hour now. She jumped from the road so often and so hard that she was in the air most of the time. As Patsy declared, she only hit the high places, and not many of them.

Why the ponderous machine did not swerve from some of the big stones or inequalities she encountered, and go shooting over the precipice into the rock-strewn valley far below, can never be explained.

She didn't. That is all that can be said.

Down came the great bowlder, jumping along as if it were full of life—and deviltry!

It did not come straight. If it had, the problem would not have been so difficult for Nick Carter.

It struck so many bumps and stones on its way that it gave no dependable indication of where it would land when it got to the road.

The only thing that looked likely was that it would run after the car wherever it might be, and smash it to kindling wood in sheer joy of destruction.

That was Patsy Garvan's view of it, although he did not put it in quite those words.

"I have a hunch it's going to get us!" he shouted. "I don't see how it can miss! Gee! Look at that bunch on top of the hill, laughing! A lot of chumps! I suppose they think it's a joke!"

"Speed on, Nick!" begged Chick, as the great stone flew into the air, only about fifty yards up the mountain. "She's almost on top of us!"

Nick Carter needed no advice just now. Out of the corner of his eye he had seen the bowlder hit another one embedded in the earth, and leap away as if it had struck a hidden mine.

Then it swerved in the direction the car was running, and there seemed no possibility of avoiding it.

With a last effort, Nick Carter tried to squeeze a little more speed out of the motor. He had the throttle wide open as it was, however. He could do no more.

It was here that the little, common, everyday, bull luck came on his side.

He had reached a slight incline—just enough to give a slight forward impetus to the car, in addition to that which it got from its engine.

On came the bowlder, and it is beyond question that, if the car had been absolutely on level ground, or had encountered a little rise, there would have been a collision which could have resulted only in an awful tragedy.

The rock swept down! It was almost on top of the car! Then, as the automobile took its little extra spurt forward, the great stone skimmed the back of the machine, actually scraping the leather cover top.

With a bang on the path, it ricocheted over to the edge

of the precipice, hung there a moment, and flew off into space!

The car rushed on, but the hands of Nick Carter, grasping the steering wheel, were as cold as those of a corpse

CHAPTER IX.

RASCALS READY FOR ACTION.

In a handsome room in the royal palace at Penza, capital of Joyalita a man in a gorgeous uniform sat at a heavy mahogny table writing.

It was very early in the morning of the eighteenth, the day on which the council was to be held that would decide the future fate of Joyalita.

A tap at the door, and in response to the gorgeous man's "Come in!" a slim man, in plain clothes, whose shifty eyes took in the whole apartment at a glance, while he ran one of his clawlike hands over his damp face, stepped forward.

"Well, Jason?" snapped the man at the table.

"I came in to tell you that everything is attended to, Don Solado. We have Prince Marcos safely in the hands of Gaspara, and there is nothing to interfere."

"Good, Jason! You have done well. I will see that proper notice is taken of your services. Prince Miguel will be in supreme power in Joyalita after the council today, and I feel that I am safe in promising you an important official position in the palace."

"I thank you, Don Solado," returned Jason. "There is a Doctor Fordham, who traveled with the prince, besides Phillips, his man—who used to be my immediate superior in the household—and another man, engaged to take my place, I believe. They will perhaps come to Joyalita."

Don Solado, the prime minister, and the man who had engineered the plot to deprive Prince Marcos of his birthright, as well as to sell the country to the neighboring country of Carita, got up from his chair and walked up and down the room as a sort of vent for his anger.

"That rascal Phillips must not be allowed to cross the border line of Joyalita. Where is Prince Miguel?"

"In his own apartments."

"I'll go and see him."

It was at this moment that the door opened again. This time it admitted no less a person than Prince Miguel himself. He was in an even more gorgeous military uniform than Don Solado, and he carried himself with the hauteur which had distinguished him while in New York, only with more of it.

Jason slipped out of the room. Miguel threw himself into a chair near the big table and looked inquiringly at Solado.

"Everything has been arranged, Miguel," said Solado, adopting the familiar tone which was his customary one when speaking to Prince Miguel alone. "We have that troublesome fellow shut up in the mountains, in charge of my amiable friend Gaspara."

"What will be the end of that?"

"Whatever you like, Miguel," was the reply. "Gaspara's orders are only to take care he does not get away. But you can depend on him to do anything that may seem necessary to make your position at the head of Joyalita's government secure."

"Anything?" whispered Miguel significantly.

"Anything. If you would prefer that he never came back, you have only to say the word to Gaspara, and there will be nothing more seen of Marcos. I don't like to go to extremes. But, if you wish it—"

"Bah! You're too mealy-mouthed, Solado," snarled Miguel. "Still, we can let that matter rest for the present. Everything ready for the council?"

"Yes."

"I'm glad of it, for I had a hard and hurried trip from New York to be here in time. When we have made the arrangement with Carita, I shall take my place as the reigning prince of Joyalita, and I think I shall then be in a position to care for those who are faithful to me."

Don Solado bowed low.

"That is the understanding, your highness!" he said, in smooth, significant accents.

Miguel left the apartment, and Don Solado went on with his preparations for the council meeting to be held that day, and which would settle the future course of the government of Joyalita.

The whole city of Penza was in a ferment. It was generally understood that there was to be a radical change in the relations of the country with its near neighbor, Carita, and there was some talk that Miguel might take the place of Prince Marcos, "because the latter felt no longer able to bear the cares of state."

As is often the case with a population ruled by hereditary princes, they had only a vague idea of what was to be done, and trusted entirely to the high officials who always had managed their affairs.

It was to be a gala day in Penza. Let the people have plenty of music, flags, and military display, and they would not be likely to interfere with more important matters.

That was the policy of Don Solado, who was in general charge, and Miguel agreed with him. The rascals had laid their plans well.

It had been given out that Prince Marcos was in the United States, and that he intended to stay there.

This in itself was calculated to lessen somewhat the affection the people of Joyalita had always shown for their prince. They could not understand why he would stay away at such a time as this, when his country surely needed him, if ever it had.

Miguel went to his private room—after strolling about the public square, in full uniform, attended by a staff of officers almost as glittering as himself. He had shown himself to the people, and now he felt that he might have a little time to look after his personal affairs before he would be called into the council chamber.

No sooner was he in his room than he took from a pocket the magnificent gold watch and fob, with their blaze of diamonds and other precious stones, and studied them for several minutes.

"The Seal of Gijon!" he muttered. "I'm glad I have such an able rascal as Jason to do things for me. I should have had difficulty in carrying out my plans without this. The seal will be necessary to make the contract binding. I have let the Carita people believe I have the seal in my possession, with the consent of Marcos. If I couldn't produce it, I should have had a hard time to explain, I am afraid. Well, here it is, and I shall have it ready when the time comes."

He sat musing pleasantly over his prospects, toying with the watch and fob. For two years and more he had been plotting to get his cousin out of the position he held, as ruler of Joyalita.

With Don Solado at his back, he had hatched all sorts of schemes, but they had all fallen down, one after the other. Some of these schemes Marcos suspected, but most of them had been concocted and then had collapsed without the good-natured prince knowing anything about them.

It was only of late that he had been convinced of Miguel's treachery. He had seen proofs of it even before the attempt to kidnap and kill him in New York City, and now he was as determined to save his country as his cousin was to hand it over to another power, with himself as the real ruler.

Miguel had gone over the whole plot in his mind, and had just come to the conclusion that it was absolutely perfect, so that it could not fail, when there came a sharp tap-tap at his door, followed by a thump.

This was the signal agreed upon between him and Solado to show that it was the latter who demanded entrance.

Miguel hastily stuffed the Seal of Gijon in his pocket and strode across the thickly carpeted floor to unlock the door.

Don Solado stumbled in, trembling and weak, and with great beads of perspiration standing forth on his flabby white face.

"He's here!" he gasped.

"Who?"

"Marcos!"

"What?" shrieked Miguel. Then, dropping his voice, he added angrily: "What are you talking about, Solado? Are you crazy? Isn't Marcos up in the mountains, with Gaspara? You told me that——"

"Yes, yes. I know what I told you. He was with Gaspara. But—he has escaped!"

Miguel sat back in his chair, his legs extended and his arms by his sides, staring stupidly at Solado.

"How was it?" he managed to ask at last. "How did he escape?"

"Just ran away when Gaspara's men were not attending to their duty," growled Solado. "He might not have got off even then, only that he had a motor car waiting for him not far away, with his physician, a Doctor Fordham, and a valet. It is all that fellow Jason's fault. He did not take proper precautions. He knew those two men were with the prince."

"Didn't he do anything to make them safe?" asked Miguel.

"Yes. He gave them something in their coffee that made them sleep, at Mala's house in Paron. But they woke up in the morning, trailed the car to Gaspara's place, and took Marcos away."

"In fact, a blunder has been made all around," snarled Miguel. "Well, we must do something, quickly, or we shall have Marcos here before the treaty is signed. He is on his way, of course."

"I know he is. He was seen in Paron this morning. He went to Mala's for some of his baggage that had been taken out of the car, and then started for Penza. I got a telegram from Mala."

"Mala deserves recognition. I'll see that he has it if we keep Marcos away. The question is, how can we do it?"

"Give me twenty cavalrymen, and I'll keep him out of Joyalita," suddenly declared Solado, with more energy than he had heretofore shown. "Young Lieutenant Trenzini is aching to have some chance to show his loyalty to you. What is more, he hates Marcos."

"That's true," observed Miguel thoughtfully. "Trenzini wanted to marry that niece of yours, Claudia, didn't he?"

"Yes. But Marcos has been polite to her a few times, and she thinks she can get him."

"Perhaps she will. I have no objection," sneered Miguel. "But he will not be ruler of Joyalita after to-day, so perhaps she won't want him then."

"Yes, she will," was Don Solado's quick reply. "I believe the girl would be fool enough to marry him if he were utterly ruined—if he would have her. Young women of her kind never have any sense, it seems to me."

"Well, that is of no consequence," shrugged Miguel. "I'll give orders for Lieutenant Trenzini to take twenty troopers and go and meet this automobile with Marcos and his men. That's what you mean, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then. Go on with your preparations for the council, and I will show myself in the public square again, after I get Trenzini off. We'll beat Marcos yet."

CHAPTER X.

THE AMBUSH IN THE PASS.

"We are about fifteen miles on the Carita side of the border line," remarked Nick Carter, as he sat in his big car outside Mala's hotel in Paron, waiting for Phillips to bring out the few things he had left in the house. "We shall be able to get to Penza easily before noon."

"If we don't have a breakdown," observed Patsy.

"We shan't break down," returned Nick. "I looked the car over too closely the last time we had to stop for tire trouble and stripped gears. She's as sound as a bell now."

"Of course she is," put in Chick. "What makes you talk about breaking down, Patsy? You know we couldn't afford it now."

"Oh, I don't know," rejoined Patsy; "if we did break down, we'd have to commandeer another car in this country, and perhaps have a scrap before we got what we wanted. I'm getting stiff for lack of exercise."

There was no answer to this. Nick Carter and Chick both smiled at the truculence of Patsy Garvan. They knew he meant what he said, but they did not desire his wishes to be fulfilled, nevertheless.

Phillips came out with a traveling bag and big coat belonging to Marcos, stowed them in the back of the car, and got in himself.

"Didn't see anything of the watch, I suppose, Phillips?" asked Nick, in a low tone.

"No, sir," replied Phillips, shaking his head. "The Seal of Gijon is in Penza, I have no doubt. We will get it when we are there."

"You are right, Phillips," said Nick Carter sternly. "We will get it. What had Mala to say for himself?"

"I didn't see him, sir. No one seems to be in the hotel at all. Or, if there are people about, they are keeping out of sight."

Nick nodded, and started the car. Then he stopped and put on the heavy coat Phillips had just brought out. He had a soft cap—an extra one that was in his baggage—which he pulled over his eyes. The other had been lost. He drew on a pair of gloves, and once more touched the electric starter.

"She's running smoothly," remarked the irrepressible Patsy, as the car glided down the slight incline of the main street of Paron. "After all the racket she's had, up in the mountains and along the road before that, we could not blame her if she did jolt a little."

"She's got to go smoothly," said Chick. "Because we have to be in Penza before noon, if we hobble into the city on rims, instead of rubber."

Nick Carter took no part in this chat. He was listening to the steady purring of the engine, and it was music to his ears that he did not care to disturb.

They had to go rather carefully down this narrow street, for it was very crooked, and some of the nearly naked children of the place had the same inclination to get in front of the car that automobilists meet with everywhere.

After about a quarter of a mile of this sort of work, they turned into the wider highroad, that gave them an opportunity to go faster. They were fairly on their way toward Penza now.

It was at this instant that Phillips leaned forward to speak to the detective, in his passionless tones.

"You need not trouble about traffic regulations, sir," he said. "There are no speed limits in Carita, nor in Joyalita, either."

"That's good to know," smiled Nick.

He let out the engine, and the car responded instantly. They were soon flying along at fifty miles an hour, which became sixty when they struck a down grade.

The detective felt the keen enjoyment which comes to the enthusiastic motorist when he has a big, flexible engine under his control, and a long, wide roadway before him.

They roared down a slope, thrashed their way up a tough incline on "high," and sped along a plateau as smooth almost as a ballroom floor, with the sun warming their shoulders and the sweet breath of full-blown trees and tropical vegetation in their nostrils.

Phillips again leaned forward as they came near the end of the plateau and touched Carter on the shoulder to call his attention. He had to raise his voice to the utmost to make the detective hear him.

"Seven miles more, sir!" he shouted. "Then we shall be clear of Carita. You see that tall white post ahead of us?"

"Yes."

"That marks the boundary line. When we are past that we are in Joyalita. We shall get to Penza in time, with something to spare."

"That's what I'm aiming for," answered Nick Carter, as he glanced at the boundary post.

"Two miles beyond that post and the shanty by the side of it, where the customs officer is keeping watch, we go through a pass. That is the real frontier, although the boundary post was put there many years ago, before it was quite settled where the line is, and is generally recognized."

This was a long speech for Phillips, especially at the top of his voice, and he dropped back in his seat, exhausted.

The car began to glide down a long grade, and Nick was hoping the customs officer would not bother him. He wanted to get up good speed passing the house, so that he could take the hill facing him with plenty of power on.

Just as he got to the house, however, a boy of about twelve years of age ran out and stood almost in front of the car, waving for him to stop.

Nick was inclined to flash past. He was in no mood to parley with a customs officer, especially when represented only by a small boy.

But another thought came to him, and he slowed down.

The boy ran to the car and jumped upon the running board, so that his face was level with the detective's.

"What is it, my boy?" asked Nick, in Spanish.

"There is danger, your highness," replied the lad, in the same tongue.

"You know me, eh?"

"Ah, yes, your highness," was the quick response, while the dark eyes flashed with a friendly light. "You are Prince Marcos. My father has said all along that you would be back in time to save your country. We used to live in Joyalita. We love Marcos."

"What is the danger you speak of?"

"Troops in the pass, your highness."

"Troops in the pass, eh? How many? Where did they come from?"

"I saw them from my bedroom window," explained the boy. "Father has a long telescope, and I looked through it at the pass about two hours ago. About twenty soldiers were galloping up from Penza. I saw them get off their horses among the rocks, and some of them lighted cigarettes, as if they were going to wait."

"Gee!" ejaculated Patsy. "We may have a scrap, after all."

"Twenty soldiers on horseback!" commented Chick. "Well, I'm not surprised. Are you, chief?"

"Not much," returned Nick. "Of course, that fellow Jason has reported that I am on my way. I know Solado is in Penza, and probably Miguel has got there, too. It would be awkward for them to have Prince Marcos turn up to-day. They would do anything to prevent it, and as they have the soldiers at their command, it is the most likely thing in the world for them to try to stop me."

"I didn't think the soldiers were against Marcos," remarked Patsy.

"Some of them are, evidently," was Nick Carter's rejoinder. "Of course, these fellows in the pass have been picked."

"Oh, yes," assented Patsy. "There are always some dirty hounds in every army. What are we going to do? Shoot them, I suppose?"

"We are going to break through somehow," replied Nick sternly. "I don't see any of them from here."

"They're hiding," explained the boy. "Two of them were watching the road when I looked through the telescope a little while ago. The others were among the trees and rocks."

"I don't think we'd better try to push through," advised Phillips. "The boy says there are twenty. There may be thirty. We are only four."

"Ah! What's the matter with you?" growled Patsy, in extreme disgust. "You won't be asked to fight. Prince Marcos and the doctor and I can clean them out ourselves."

"I will fight if you go on," returned Phillips simply.

The valet meant what he said. He was a noncombatant from preference. But, like many men of his quiet, unobtrusive nature, he would fight like a wild cat when cornered.

"We'll go on," said Nick Carter, in a matter-of-fact tone. "Thank you, my boy!"

He took a gold coin from his pocket and gave it to the lad, who literally fell off the running board in astonishment and delight.

"Thank you, your highness! I hope you will get to Penza all right!" cried the boy after them as the car started and began to roll away at a good speed to make the next hill.

"You'd better keep your heads low," suggested Nick. "Phillips, I am sorry we have got you into this."

"Never mind, your highness! The saints will preserve us!" was the valet's fervent response.

"Full speed ahead, chief!" called out Patsy. "Gee! This is where we begin to live!"

Chick said nothing. But he took his automatic revolver from his pocket and examined it affectionately.

As the car took the hill it was shadowed for some distance by large trees, which not only shut off their view of the pass, but prevented the soldiers seeing the car until it was comparatively near.

Nick Carter's pistol was ready to his hand in the right pocket of his overcoat, and his two assistants had their weapons in their fingers.

What Phillips was doing was his own business, but there was a determined expression in his usually stolid face which promised well when the clash should come.

There was a dip toward the pass, too, so that the car was out of sight until it reached the brow of the last hill—always supposing it had not been sighted from the rise on which the boy's home stood.

"We'll coast down this one," observed Nick. "If we can crash right through those fellows without having to stop and fight them, it will save time!"

"Bully!" roared Patsy. "Tear into them!"

Nick Carter switched off his power with a touch of the magneto key. Then, with his gears taken off, so that they were in neutral, he let the car surge down the long slope by its own momentum.

There was no noise from the big machine save for the faint rasp of the wide nonskid tires on the road.

Faster and faster it shot along, until, as they reached a speed of more than a mile a minute, the immense body began to sway from side to side in a way that made Phillips' teeth chatter, as he clung to the side.

Chick and Patsy were too much interested in the prospect of a fight to care how fast they were going.

The automobile was halfway down the hill before the sentries sighted it. They had been listening for the sound of the engine. By shutting it off, Nick Carter had fooled them completely.

Suddenly a hoarse shout broke from the lips of one of the two soldiers. He wheeled around and darted down the slope toward the pass, bellowing: "The car! Here it is! Prince Marcos is here!"

He called over his shoulder to his comrade to shoot, and kept on his own way to warn the others hiding in the narrow pass.

The second sentry did his best to carry out his comrade's advice, and brought his carbine to his shoulder.

But he could not take steady aim at a car that was moving toward him at the rate of nearly seventy miles an hour. He might as well have leveled his gun at a flash of lightning.

The soldier did his best, however. He pointed his gun in a general way at Nick Carter's head and pulled the trigger.

There was a crack, hardly heard through the shouts and the rushing of the car, and the bullet went six feet too high, at least.

Then Phillips came to the front. He brought out a revolver, and, as the car came level with the soldier who had just fired, the valet sent a bullet into his chest.

There was a shriek, followed by a gurgling groan, from the trooper, and down he went in a huddled heap. The car surged past, and those in it hardly had time to see what became of the man.

"Bully for you, Phillips!" shouted Patsy. "You plugged him good! Wow! You're all right, old socks!"

The trouble was not over yet, however.

When the first sentry rushed back to the pass, his cries aroused the whole troop, who were dozing among the bowlders at the other end.

Lieutenant Trenzini had wrapped himself in his cavalry cloak, and, with a cigarette between his lips, had found a nice shady spot, with green grass growing thickly on the ground. It was an ideal place for a rest, and the good lieutenant was making the most of it.

He was the first to hear the warning cry of the sentry. With a bound, he was on his feet.

The clattering of the accouterments told that his men had followed his example and were ready for orders. He rushed across the high ground and hailed the excited sentinel.

"What's that?" demanded the lieutenant. "Do you say the car is coming? Are you sure? Did you see Prince Marcos?"

"Yes, sir," returned the man, after gasping a moment to recover his breath. "I saw the prince. He is driving. It is almost here now. It came before we expected it. The trees, and the motor shut off, and——"

Crack!

From the other side of the pass came to their ears the sound of the sentry's carbine, followed by the spiteful roar of Phillips' revolver.

"Quick, men!" bellowed Lieutenant Trenzini. "Line the road, and, as the car comes through, be ready to shoot. Aim low and shoot to kill!" he added savagely. "They've killed one of our men, but we'll make them pay for that. We shall be backed up at Penza. Don't forget that. Prince Miguel——"

There was a scampering of heavily booted men as his soldiers rushed to obey their officer's orders, and he did not proceed any farther. He knew his men were all with him.

As Nick Carter had easily conjectured, they were all "picked" men.

Four or five of them had already reached the road away from the bowlders, and were taking up their positions to command the car with their carbines, when, from the other end of the pass, arose a frenzied howl of alarm.

"Look! Look!" shouted the soldier who had gone a little farther along the pass than his comrades. "It's a charge! What are we to do?"

The soldier was so terrified that he turned to see which

was to run. But the other troopers were behind him, and he could not escape.

They were standing only about a hundred feet from the end of the pass.

A moment later the car came out of the pass like a torpedo. It cleared the hundred feet at a single leap. Nick Carter had no time to steer clear of the soldiers crowding into the roadway.

The fact that he knew they would have sent a shattering volley into the car if they had had time, consoled him somewhat for the desperate action he was compelled to take.

Like a great juggernaut, the automobile plunged through the ranks of the startled troopers—a very fiend of devastation!

From the road arose a chorus of heavy groans and maddened shrieks, and the swaying of the front wheels told Nick Carter and his companions that they were making an awful pathway over living bodies.

It was all over as soon as it had begun. The car cleared the pass and flashed along the road, still on its way to Penza.

How many men had been killed or horribly mutilated could not be told.

The detective kept his car going. This was war, and mercy was not to be considered.

Lieutenant Trenzini let loose a torrent of frenzied oaths. He was insane with impotent rage, and he shook his fist after the flying car like the maniac he had become.

Then he turned to his men, half of whom were groaning and writhing on the ground, while the remainder seemed to have lost their senses, courage and all.

"Fire! Fire!" he bellowed. "Curse you! Why don't you fire?"

The habit of obedience is irresistible with the trained soldier. As the order came, those of the troop who were uninjured raised their carbines and pointed them at the fast-disappearing car.

They rapped out a scattering volley. It was wholly ineffective.

The bullets whistled and sung around the car, sending up flicks of dust from the road, or whining over the heads of the occupants. One bullet even struck a mudguard, making a slight dent on the very edge.

Without aim, and in a condition of panic, how could men be expected to shoot straight?

With all this, the speed of the car was its main safeguard. In a few seconds it was entirely out of range, and directly afterward vanished around a bend in the road.

"Glory!" shouted Patsy Garvan. "That's one for us. Is there any other place where they can lay for us like that, Phillips?"

"No. That is the only part of the road where there would be a chance of ambush," replied Phillips quietly. "If there is any more attempt to stop us, it must be made out in the open."

"I don't think they will dare that," observed Nick Carter.

He was right. No one interfered with them again, and it was just ten minutes before noon when he marched into the council hall, in the full uniform of Prince Marcos, and placed his veto on the treaty that would have sold Joyalita into the hands of Carita and put Prince Miguel on the throne that belonged to his cousin.

He had already had the Seal of Gijon taken from the rascal who meant to use it to further his own schemes.

When the car rattled up to the palace, there were plenty of people who thought they recognized Marcos, and the cheers with which he was received proved his popularity. At the same time it struck a death knell to the black heart of Miguel.

Phillips was delighted. He led Nick to the prince's chamber and quickly dressed him in his uniform of state.

When the work of dressing was complete, Phillips stood back, and, with a low bow, murmured:

"Your highness, Prince Marcos! Who can deny it?"

Miguel, Don Solado, Jason, and Lieutenant Trenzini are all in prison now. They were charged with high treason, and although Marcos might have passed over their crimes, in his easy-going way, his minister would not allow it. Even a monarch cannot do as he pleases in affairs of state.

It was not till a month after Nick Carter, in the person of Marcos, had saved Joyalita that the proceedings against the traitors were begun, however.

Through the astute Phillips, it was announced officially that Prince Marcos had been overcome by the journey to Penza and the excitement of the council, and must not see any one for several weeks.

Nick Carter, Chick, and Patsy were all smuggled away. They wanted to reach New York as soon as they could get there.

They found Marcos almost entirely recovered from his wound.

Nick Carter wasted no time in sending him down to Joyalita to take his rightful place.

When Marcos went he was accompanied not only by his mother, but also by Claudia Solado and hers. This was because a wedding was to take place soon at Penza. Marcos made Claudia his princess.

* * * * * * *

"She's some girl, is Claudia!" remarked Patsy Garvan, as he listened to a letter his chief had just received from Penza, two months after their adventures down in Joyalita. "If I were not a married man, I believe I would have tried to steal her from Marcos. What do *you* say, Chick?"

"She's worth any man's stealing, I should say," laughed Chick.

"She is worthy of Prince Marcos, who saved his country," added Nick Carter. "And that's praise enough for any young woman."

"Oh, come off!" rejoined Patsy. "What are you giving us, chief? Marcos is all right, of course. But the man who really saved Joyalita was a gentleman by the name of Nicholas Carter, and you know it."

"My two assistants gave me good help or it never could have been done," was Nick Carter's modest response.

THE END.

"The Pressing Peril; or, Nick Carter and the Star Looters," will be the title of the long complete story which you will find in the next issue, No. 139, of the NICK CARTER STORIES, out May 8th. In this narrative will be found some of the most interesting adventures of the famous detective. There will be the usual serial and other items of interest.

Dared for Los Angeles.

By ROLAND ASHFORD PHILLIPS.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 134 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER XIX.

TWENTY PRECIOUS MINUTES.

It seemed to Nash that an eternity passed before he finally brought himself together, groped for the candles, found and lighted them. By this time Miss Breen had come back to the world again, and when he spoke to her she moved, and afterward drew herself erect, leaning against the damp chamber wall.

Nash comforted her as best he could, but she seemed dazed, and unable to understand. Her first coherent words were:

"What—time—is—it?"

Nash showed her his watch. She bent down to it, holding it between her hands, gazing steadily upon the white dial.

"Twenty-five minutes after seven," she murmured. Nash nodded. Suddenly she lurched to her feet.

"We—we can't die—like rats in a hole!" she exclaimed hysterically. "Why don't you do something? Why do you stand like that? I'll help you! We've only thirty-five minutes left!"

A swift throb of pity surged into Nash's heart. He fancied that horror and fear had driven the girl out of her right mind. Perhaps it was just as well, he reasoned dully, for when the time came——

He steeled himself against the fear that was slowly mastering him. He must not give up until the last minute of the precious thirty-five.

"I'll try again," he said aloud. "I feel—stronger now. Hold those candles higher—higher. There—that's right!"

Once more he tore at the pitiless barrier of stone that shut them in from the stars. His new strength was not imaginary; he moved huge rocks which, a few minutes before, he could not budge. But the struggle was not for long. A great slab of granite met his fingers, and although he exerted every ounce of his strength—until all the muscles in his tired body seemed to tear themselves asunder—the cold, slippery rock refused to give.

He sank down in the mire of the cleared space, breathing heavily. "It's useless," he panted. "Might as well tackle a sheet of armor plate.

The first of the two candles burned down, and Miss Breen dropped it to the floor. The other one was half gone.

"Careful—of the light," he said, wondering as he said it why he had thought of such a thing. "I haven't any more matches."

The minutes ticked away. The water dripped steadily from the roof, splashing on his hands. Fascinated, he stared at the sickly yellow flame that pulsated atop the remaining candle.

Then, with a quickening of his pulse, he jerked himself erect.

"Do you see how that candle burns?" he burst out, his voice ringing strongly. "It wouldn't last so long if there wasn't a lot of air." He sniffed critically. "And it's fresh and clean, too! Why didn't I think of it before?"

A new color sprang to the girl's cheeks as Nash finished. She seemed to sense a triumphant note in his steady voice.

"Here, Miss Breen!" he exclaimed. "Follow me with that candle! Hurry now!"

He led the way to the distant corner, where the cases of dynamite were stacked. Without a word of explanation, he began to pull them down recklessly. Finally he gave a shout.

"An air vent!" he cried. "I thought so. The boys told me something about this crevice—but I didn't pay any attention at the time. Come along, Miss Breen! We'll cheat this explosion yet."

The hole, or, rather, a crevice, ran up at an angle, and was barely wide enough for the passage of a body. Nash took the candle and forced the girl in before him. They crawled slowly and painfully ahead.

A gust of fresh air struck their faces.

"We're almost there," Nash shouted. "Don't stop! Keep up your nerve! You're doing splendidly, Miss Breen! We'll have to make a run for it after we get out!"

Miss Breen, who was well ahead, at last uttered a little cry. She was scrambling out into the soft moonlit world.

There!" Nash drank deep of the air. "It's all over but the shouting now. One more pull and——"

Miss Breen was standing free now, amid the scrub oak and aspens that grew thickly about the mouth of the hole. Nash, himself, his head and shoulders well out of the crevice, and ready to give the final effort that would serve to lift him beside the girl, suddenly felt a weight crush against his legs. For the moment he struggled desperately; then stopped.

"What's the matter?" Miss Breen asked, frowning. "Why don't you hurry?" She steadied herself, and stretched out a hand. "Here, take hold. Maybe I can help some."

Nash took in a deep breath, and put forth a determined effort, but it was a useless exertion. His legs were wedged firmly.

"I—I'm stuck, somehow," he said. "Some loose rock is pressing against my legs."

"Stuck?" Miss Breen cried aloud. "Oh, not now! Not when we're all but free. Try hard."

Nash did not need the girl's encouragement to urge him to a greater endeavor. Savagely he jerked, but the sharp edges of the rock were cutting into his flesh, and the pain caused by this effort brought a smothered groan to his lips.

"Can't budge," he said at last, strangely calm now that he realized his helpless position. "Listen to me, Miss Breen," he commanded, fumbling for his watch. "You've got to run like a March hare." He peered closely at the watch, barely able to distinguish the hands in the moonlight. "You've less than half an hour to get away. This whole mountaintop will go up like a skyrocket in twenty minutes. And if you're within half a mile——"

The girl's eyes widened with terror; she was instantly aware of the situation. "But you!" she cried. "You can't—remain here."

"We can't waste time arguing," Nash answered.

"But—but surely I can do something," she faltered. "Tell me where the men are. I'll warn them that you are——"

"It is impossible, Miss Breen. They are over a mile from here, and you can only cross the river at one point.

A man used to the trails couldn't cover the distance under an hour."

"Then—the wires!" she exclaimed. "I can cut them."

For the instant Nash entertained that hope. Yet, after reflection he knew such a quest was useless.

"We've come out of the chamber on the opposite side of the mountain," he told her. "You could never in the world find your way around to the mouth of the drift. There are no paths."

Miss Breen continued to gaze upon him with terror-stricken eyes. The pain in Nash's legs was becoming more and more severe. He fought back the desire to groan, although he knew his lips were trembling and that his face must be very white.

"For God's sake, Miss Breen," he said, "go away from here! There is yet a chance that I can free myself before —— Anyway, you can do no good. Go straight down the slope, and turn under the high cliffs below the pipe line."

She sank down beside him, overcome, as Nash fancied, by the horror of it all. He began to fear that she would have no strength left with which to run.

"What—time is it?" she begged. Yet before he could take out his watch her hand crept into his pocket, removing it.

"It's a quarter to eight," she announced. She held the watch in her hands, forgetting to return it.

Nash pleaded with her once more. "You must get away! You must! If the worst should happen—yours would be a useless sacrifice. You can do me no good by remaining. Your own life is——"

"Don't, don't, don't!" she choked, interrupting him. "I —I am not worthy."

He stared into her partly hidden face. "Miss Breen," he commanded firmly, "every minute is precious. Pull yourself together. You must be brave."

"Yes," she repeated, "I must be brave." Never had her voice sounded so strangely. "I've been—been a coward all these months. Now—now I'm going to be brave. I'm going to tell you the truth. You've sacrificed everything for me. I—I should have known before." She caught at her breath, and forced back a sob. "Mr. Nash, I—I have been living a lie. I am not merely an Eastern girl out here for my health, as you suspected—as I led you to believe. I—I am a spotter employed by the city of Los Angeles."

The declaration came like a blow in the face to Nash. For the moment he forgot his pain—forgot the situation —forgot that in a few minutes the whole mountaintop would be a living volcano.

"You—a spotter?" he asked, scarcely believing his ears. And then, feeling a throb of pity for the girl, he changed. "Well, what does it matter? There has been no harm done."

"But there *has* been harm done," she stammered, looking at him with bewildered, misted eyes. "There *has* been harm done! I—I have informed the authorities at Los Angeles, and—and you are to be arrested before the week is out."

"Informed the authorities!" Nash could only stare at her. "Arrested?" He started to say something, then hesitated. He fancied, suddenly, that he understood. Miss Breen, breaking under the strain, was bereft of her right mind. Her declarations were but the wanderings of a shattered brain.

He sought to humor her. He must get her away from this spot before it was too late.

"There, there, Miss Breen," he said. "Don't worry. Everything will come out all right. Only—only you mustn't stay here another instant. You must run away—now please——"

"Oh, you don't seem to understand," she burst out, almost in a frenzy. "You're not taking what I say to be serious. Can't you realize the truth? I have told the authorities—the police—and they were to arrest you. It would mean—mean a long term in prison. And—and I would be the cause of it all."

The girl's earnest, almost pleading assertion aroused Nash. She appeared to be telling the truth. And yet——

"What did you tell the authorities?" he demanded.

"That—that you were not following the city specifications."

Her declaration seemed so absurd that, despite the situation, Nash laughed. If he had a moment since entertained one atom of belief in Miss Breen's statements, this final declaration killed it. Too well he knew he had followed the specifications from the head office; had double-checked them, assured himself that every figure was right. He would be willing to wager his life that his work—the work he was held directly and solely responsible for—was flawless.

Further argument, he felt, would be useless. The moments were far too precious. So, when he at last spoke, it was upon another subject; one that appeared to him to be more vital.

"What time is it, Miss Breen?" he asked calmly.

Her eyes sought the watch, which she still held. "It—it is ten minutes to eight," she answered.

"Then you've yet time," he pleaded. "Don't argue. It won't do any good. Get away—now, while you can."

She lifted her eyes from the watch. He fancied her cheeks were flaming with color.

"Is—is the button to be pressed promptly at eight?" she questioned.

"Yes. Those were my orders. You must not——"

"But suppose something happened," she interrupted, "to prevent the explosion?"

"What do you mean?"

"If the explosion doesn't occur at eight o'clock—isn't it probable it will not occur at all?"

"Miss Breen!" he half shouted. "Don't stay here and waste time with such foolish questions. You——"

"If—if the explosion doesn't come at eight—it won't come at all. Isn't that—right?" she burst out.

"For Heaven's sake, Miss Breen, get away from here. Can't you understand? Can't you see how senseless——"

Miss Breen did a totally unexpected thing. She laughed loudly. Then, even as Nash was staring as upon a madwoman, she stopped, trembled, and instantly had thrown herself face down to the rocks, pillowing her head in her arms, and sobbing wildly, hysterically, like a frightened child.

CHAPTER XX.

AFTERWARD.

To say that Nash was amazed at this mingled display of tears and laughter, would be putting it mildly. He reached out his arm and attempted to grip hers. But she had fallen just a few inches too far away.

"Miss Breen," he called. "Miss Breen!"

Her sobbing had stopped as abruptly as it had come. And although she did not answer him, there came to his ears another sound, which like the striking of a gong in a fire house, immediately sent his pulses racing like mad.

Some one was shouting. Lifting his head Nash answered back. Then the still night air was rent by a chorus of maddening yells. Nash could not reason it all out for the moment, but turning his eyes, he saw far below him a dozen men climbing up the slope—and at their head he made out the figure of his subforeman—the man who was to have pressed the button that would have torn asunder the mountaintop.

"Hello!" came the leader's voice. "That you, Nash?"

Nash answered. Almost instantly, it appeared, he was surrounded by the members of the "coyote" gang.

"We thought something was up," the foreman was saying, "and thank God there was, too! I pressed the button at eight o'clock—and nothing happened. I knew the battery was O. K., so the only thing I could think of was that the wires had been broken."

"At—at eight o'clock!" exclaimed Nash. "What are you talking about? It isn't that time yet."

"What's the matter with your watch?" The foreman was laughing. "Why, it's blamed near nine."

Nash frowned. "Take care of Miss Breen," he said. "She's fainted, I guess."

One of the men handed him his watch. He looked at it. The hands marked eight-forty. Then, in a flash, he understood. Miss Breen had, for some reason or other, lied to him.

"How in the deuce did you get wedged in here?" the foreman interrupted.

"Miss Breen and I were inspecting the rock chamber. The tunnel caved in—must have cut the wires at the same time. Then I discovered the air vent, and we managed to get out—that is, Miss Breen did. Something's got my legs in a vise."

Luckily the men were prepared for trouble, and they had brought some tools. So, after fifteen minutes of hard work, Nash was released. His legs were cut and cramped, but otherwise he was uninjured.

As soon as he had restored the circulation to his stiff legs by walking around for a minute or two, he concerned himself with Miss Breen. She was still in a dead faint.

"Plucky girl," he muttered to himself. "Didn't faint until it was all over. And a spotter, too." He looked down into her white face. "Wonder why she lied to me about the time?"

No idea did come to him that might have explained this last, and, although he would have liked to believe it, the thing seemed all but impossible.

"We've got to get Miss Breen home," he said, speaking aloud to the foreman. "Get two of the boys to rig up a stretcher."

"Where does she live?" inquired the other.

"Elkhorn Ranch."

"So?" The foreman looked surprised. "That's where Macmillan stayed. Some folks from there came in about seven o'clock to claim his body."

Nash frowned. Macmillan living at the same ranch as Miss Breen! Perhaps this explained something definite as to the cause of that certain night's affair.

Fifteen minutes later Miss Breen came to. She was still very weak, and Nash did not question her, much as he would have liked to do so. Instead, he gave her in charge of two of the boys, who carried her down the slope where the ponies had been left. Here she was lifted to a saddle, and supported on both sides, while the journey toward the Elkhorn Ranch was begun.

Nash, meanwhile, indifferent to the strain he had been under, and to the questions which still puzzled him, immediately issued orders, and the remaining group of men, led by himself and the foreman, tramped over the hill and down the opposite side to where the tunnel mouth yawned.

It took the best part of an hour to remove the debris from the drift, and to repair the broken wire. With this completed, they went down to where the horses were grazing, and were shortly on their way to camp.

"We'll postpone the fireworks until to-morrow night," Nash said, in answer to the foreman's inquiry.

The foreman apparently was realizing what a narrow escape Nash had suffered this night, and the single incident that had prevented the explosion.

"Good Lord!" he muttered, while he and Nash were riding side by side. "Think of what might have happened—had that wire been intact! The more I think of it the weaker I get."

"You'd never have found a piece of me," Nash answered. "Nor of Miss Breen, for that matter. What a disappearance!"

"Who is this—Miss Breen?"

"Well," Nash answered frankly, "as long as you have been doing your work faithfully, I might as well confess. She's a spotter."

The foreman swore. "A spotter?"

"Yes. But somehow I never feel afraid. Never have. Oh, I know how the majority of men feel about such things. Spotters represent all that is undesirable to them—and they take the easiest method of ridding themselves of so-called trouble-makers. Seems foolish to me. A man who is doing his work right should not fear inspection."

"Don't you?" asked the foreman.

"Why should I? Camp Forty-seven is run on the square. My books are always open. I'm willing that the whole engineering board should come here and make a personal examination."

The foreman turned and glanced swiftly, curiously, into Nash's face. "There's no danger of such a thing happening, is there?"

"It isn't probable," Nash answered. "Why?"

The foreman shrugged and laughed. "Oh, nothing. Of course, I'm not worrying—it isn't my place to do so. You're the responsible party here, and you're too clever a man to leave such things as—as footprints or thumb marks about."

"You are not insinuating that I might——" began Nash.

"Certainly not!" exclaimed the other, interrupting. "But often a spotter—particularly a woman, is likely to get a line on some things that ought to be—well, kept under cover."

They had reached camp by this time, and when the foreman finished with his declaration, he laughed again, and turned into a dark side street.

"See you later, Mr. Nash," he called back.

Nash continued alone up the main street of the camp, pondering over the man's conversation.

"He knows something—or thinks he does, anyway," Nash muttered to himself. "If I wasn't absolutely sure of

myself——" He stopped, laughing at his own suspicions. "Nonsense. I'll see that fellow in the morning, and find out just what he's aiming at."

CHAPTER XXI.

MORE COMPLICATIONS.

The day following, however, Nash found so much additional work laid out for him that all other matters, especially those of a personal nature, were relegated to the background.

The "coyote" was exploded at eight o'clock that night, and Nash sought his cabin an hour later, dead tired, but with the satisfaction of knowing the carefully planned drift and rock chamber had accomplished the purpose intended. The double explosion had ripped off the mountaintop in the twinkling of an eye. A hundred men in a hundred days could not have duplicated the performance.

The job had been watched with a great deal of interest by the engineers and foremen on the other sections of the aqueduct, and Nash received a dozen telephone calls congratulating him on the success of the undertaking.

He was just back in his quarters, when a knock sounded on his door, and, opening it, he allowed a surprised exclamation to escape him.

"Miss Breen! Come right in."

The girl obeyed him. She was dressed in her usual riding habit. Her face did not have the usual color and life, and her eyes were far from being alive and sparkling.

"Mr. Nash," she began hurriedly, ignoring the chair he had pulled out, "I've come to warn you. You—you must get away before morning."

"Get away?" Nash frowned, then laughed. "And why?"

"Are you never going to take me seriously?" she demanded, almost bitterly. "Have you forgotten what I told you—last night on the top of the mountain?"

"I've not forgotten," he answered; "but I half fancied you were out of your head at the time."

"I told you that the authorities at Los Angeles were coming here—to arrest you. I meant it. They will be here the first thing in the morning. That is why I rode from the ranch to-night. You must not remain here."

"Miss Breen," he said quietly, "I cannot run away—I would not run away. What you have said about my not following the city specifications is absurd. I can prove it to you. Let the authorities come. I will welcome any investigation they may make."

His calm voice seemed to puzzle her. She stood in the center of the room, nervously fingering her heavy gloves.

"I am betraying my trust—in warning you," she wavered. "Why do you hesitate? You can easily ride into San Fernando, and take the early train up to Frisco. It may mean years of imprisonment if you remain in this camp."

"Believing me guilty, Miss Breen," he ventured curiously to ask, "why are you doing this?"

The first color came to her cheeks. "Because—I hate to think—I——"

"Why did you not try to aid me the other night? The night I was about to capture the man who had smashed our water mains? Why did you cry out that my gun was unloaded—and allow him to escape?"

"I—I—— Oh, I did not understand at the time. I had met Mr. Macmillan at the ranch. He told me so many lies—lies about you. I was foolish, and believed them. That is why I was startled when I met you that first day on the trail—the day my horse ran away. He told me there was crooked work going on in the camp—and said you were responsible. So when I saw him that night I felt sorry for him. I called out and allowed him to get away."

Nash shook his head. "He did not get away—far," he answered. "I suppose you heard about——"

She nodded. "Yes. They brought his body to the ranch to-night."

"Macmillan was an old subforeman in this camp when I came here," Nash explained. "I was put to work under him. We had an argument, and I proved him to be in the wrong. Mr. Hooker, then the foreman of the camp, discharged him, and gave me his position. That explains his hatred of me."

"Oh, I wouldn't have believed a word of his story—had I not discovered the truth myself," Miss Breen broke out impulsively. "I liked you from the very first. You seemed to be built of different stuff from most men. I couldn't believe that you would——"

"That I would what, Miss Breen?" demanded Nash.

"That you would cheat your own city—the city you loved so well. Why, I remember that day you pointed out the work to me—and seemed so proud, so enthusiastic over the construction."

"How have I cheated my city?" His tone was more of a command now, and he felt the hot blood mounting to his face. "How have I cheated my city, Miss Breen?"

"Do you remember the day I examined the steel siphons—the day you were showing me around the camp?"

"Yes." Nash instantly recalled to mind the interest Miss Breen had shown in the work, and the unusual questions she had asked.

"The steel in those siphons is but seven-eighths of an inch in thickness," she declared. "The specifications call for one and one-eighth inches."

"Impossible!" Nash exclaimed. "That I should make such a mistake as that is preposterous. I have my specifications on file."

He crossed the room, and took down the board upon which he kept the statements pinned. "Here is the last order from headquarters," he said. "Hooker brought them to me over a month ago." He ran his finger down the line of quotations. "Here—siphon steel for Soledad Cañon——"

He stopped, frowning; then he peered nearer. Miss Breen had followed him, and was looking over his shoulder.

"It says one-and-one-eighth-inch steel," she declared.

"But—but something's wrong. These are not the specifications I was given. They've been changed."

"Changed? How?"

"I don't know—unless——" Nash suddenly clenched his fingers. These were not the specifications given him by Hooker; he could swear to that. These were not the orders he had pinned to his board a few weeks previous. Who had changed them? And why?

Some one was passing the cabin, whistling. Nash hurried over, and jerked open the door. The man outside was one of the foremen.

"I say, Macklyn," Nash called, "you've been around here all day, haven't you?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Seen any one around my cabin?"

Macklyn studied for the interval. "Can't say as I have—that is, nobody but Hooker."

"Hooker?" Nash repeated sharply.

"Yes. He was around here this afternoon. Saw him go into your cabin—and then come out again in about ten minutes."

Nash closed the door, and turned to face the girl.

"Those specifications were changed this afternoon," he announced firmly, grimly. "And Hooker is the man who changed them."

CHAPTER XXII.

A BOOK OF VERSES.

Miss Breen waited a considerable time before she spoke. Nash was so engrossed with his own thoughts that he did not wonder at it.

"Why would Mr. Hooker change the specifications?" she asked.

"I don't know. I can't understand what motive might prompt such a thing," Nash admitted.

"You are in full authority here, aren't you?" Miss Breen inquired.

Nash nodded. "Absolutely."

"And this Mr. Hooker always brought you the orders from Los Angeles?"

"Yes. He was acting as a sort of secretary to Sigsbee."

"This Mr. Sigsbee is one of the aqueduct board," Miss Breen said. "He also interested himself in Camp Forty-seven. I was given particular orders to watch the work on this camp. I believe he was suspected of crooked dealing."

"I know he was," Nash admitted. "It was being carried on while I was under Hooker. I discovered the pay-roll padding. When I threatened to disclose matters, Sigsbee asked me to call at his Los Angeles office."

"What happened there?"

"I was given full charge of the camp."

"And also the full responsibility," Miss Breen added suddenly. "If anything went wrong, you would be held to account."

Nash admitted the truth of her statement.

"Didn't it appeal to you that Mr. Sigsbee's offer at that time was rather—unusual?"

"Yes. I had expected to be discharged. But Sigsbee seemed to be so anxious for me to accept—so sorry that the crooked work had been unearthed. He declared that from then on Camp Forty-seven was to be the model for all others on the construction right of way. He wanted me to run it on that basis, and promised that he would stand by me to the last."

Miss Breen listened, her face very grave. Finally she said:

"Did you know that Sigsbee was interested in a steel company?"

"I recall now that he mentioned something of the sort," Nash answered, a sudden suspicion entering his mind.

"I was in Los Angeles day before yesterday," Miss Breen said. "It was then I notified the authorities. Yesterday I learned that Sigsbee had left for San Francisco, and intended taking a trip to Honolulu. I wondered at the time—now I have ceased to."

"What do you mean?" Nash demanded, startled by her tone.

"Just this." Miss Breen spoke rapidly, and with confidence. Apparently she had a more intimate knowledge of Sigsbee than Nash first imagined. The few remarks Nash had dropped had helped to cement together her story. "Camp Forty-seven has long been under suspicion. Sigsbee must have been alarmed—and the first thing he sought to do was to throw all the blame upon another's shoulders. You happened into the game at an inopportune moment. He closed your mouth by putting you in charge here. Then, to help matters along, he arranged these false specifications, which you blindly followed. He knew discovery was certain, and planned for it. It has happened. Sigsbee is cleared of all blame. Everything will be shifted upon your shoulders, Mr. Nash. The false specifications are missing—the real ones are here. Sigsbee will swear, and Hooker will undoubtedly back him up, that these correct ones were the only ones sent. They've dropped you into a cage, and you have sprung the trap."

Before she had half finished, Nash understood the situation. It came to him swiftly, brutally. Sigsbee's fawning and Hooker's honeyed words had been the strings with which he had been led into the trap.

"You're right, Miss Breen," he said finally. "I'm caught—and all but helpless. I have not one thing to prove that I——"

The girl interrupted with a cry. "Oh, why, why didn't I wait until I knew for sure!" she stammered. "I took everything for granted. I thought you guilty. Oh, you can't remain here, Mr. Nash. I am to blame for it all. You cannot stay here."

"But wouldn't it be an admission of guilt to run away?" he asked. "Of course it would. And I don't intend to do so."

"Oh, but what chance have you against Sigsbee and his political influence?" she cried.

"I'll make a chance," he answered firmly. "I'm innocent. I've tried to do what was right. Things can't be as black as they look."

Miss Breen walked up and down the floor for an interval; then she stopped.

"There's one way out of this affair," she ventured, "and just one."

Nash nodded. "You mean—we've got to get those false specifications! Isn't that it?"

"Yes. We've got to get them. But that does not mean," she said, changing her tone, "that you are to stay here. You get away before morning. I will try to find Hooker and the papers. Once I have them I will let you know. Then you can return."

Nash shook his head gravely. "Impossible!"

"Oh, why do you act so foolish?" she demanded. "It may be months before we can locate those specifications. Meanwhile they will hurry the trial, and you'll be sentenced."

"I am innocent. What have I to fear?"

"It is the innocent man who always suffers," she answered bitterly.

"This isn't New York, Miss Breen," Nash replied. "They do things differently out here. I'm not afraid."

Miss Breen sank helplessly to a chair. "Why do you always prate about the East and the West?" she exclaimed. "A crooked job is a crooked job, whether it is staged in Los Angeles or New York. Sigsbee is a shrewd man, and he has laid a shrewd trap. Yet you're willing to bow submissively, and——" She stopped suddenly.

During her speech her eyes had been upon the crudely built bookcase. Abruptly she drew nearer, forgetting apparently to continue what she had started. Her arm shot out, and she plucked, from the row of other books, the dainty, leather-bound copy of Kipling's "Barrack-room Ballads"—the book given to Nash by the tramp in Central Park.

She opened it and rapidly thumbed the pages, stopping at the one across which was written a name.

"Where—where did you get this book?" Miss Breen demanded, her voice sounding husky.

Nash smiled. "Why, that book of poems? A panhandler gave it to me one day in Los Angeles," he replied. "Said he had found it on a bench."

"In—in Central Park?"

"Yes."

Her face was curiously white and drawn now. Nash took a step nearer.

"Why are you so interested?" he asked.

"This book—belonged to my brother," she wavered. "I gave it to him—it was the last thing I——"

"Your brother? Nash was dumfounded. Many times since the first discovery of the name written in the little book he had turned to it curiously; pondered over it, wondered how and in what way Walter Trask's volume had crossed the width of the continent to find a lodging place on a bench in Los Angeles. "Walter Trask—is your brother?" he said slowly.

Miss Breen nodded. Her eyes were clouded with tears.

"But the name—how——" began Nash, puzzled.

"My name is Ethel Trask," she replied. "Because I was—was in this business, I used the other—Miss Breen. I had meant to tell you before."

"But your brother, Miss Breen—I mean, Miss Trask." Nash questioned anxiously. "Was he an engineer on the New York Aqueduct?"

"Yes. He worked there—until his death."

Nash caught his breath—but so light was the act that the girl did not appear to notice.

"Dead?" he asked. "Walter Trask—dead?"

Miss Trask nodded. Nash stood looking down at her, preparing himself for the final question:

"How did he meet his death?"

"He was killed in a brawl." Miss Trask spoke slowly, painfully, as if the recollection was a bitter one. "One of the other engineers—shot him."

TO BE CONTINUED.

COVERING A YAWNING MOUTH.

A well-bred man puts his hand over his mouth when he yawns, but not one well-bred man in ten thousand knows why. The reason is this:

"Four or five hundred years ago there was a superstition common in Europe that the devil was always lying in wait to enter a man's body and take possession of him.

Satan generally went in by the mouth, but when he had waited a reasonable time and the man did not open his mouth, the devil made him yawn, and when his mouth was open, jumped down his throat.

So many cases of this kind occurred that the people learned to make the sign of the cross over their mouths whenever they yawned, in order to scare away the devil.

The peasantry in Italy and Spain still adhere to this method, but most other people have dispensed with the cross sign, and keep out the devil by simply placing the hand before the lips. It is a most remarkable survival of a practice after the significance has perished.

A YOUNG FINANCIER.

A certain man, in order to impress business methods on his son early in life, told the youngster that if he would see that the gas bill was paid before a certain day each quarter, he could have the discount for himself.

The boy took very kindly to the idea, and captured the discount every time the bill came in. To his father's surprise, however, the gas bill began to increase at a remarkable rate. He found one night that his son was burning gas all over the top of the house from ten o'clock until six o'clock the next morning. The youngster had become a Napoleon of finance, and had discovered the fact that the bigger bill the bigger the discount.

LAST WHITE RHINOCEROS.

A wonderous brute, which only within the present century emerged from the realm of myth into that of scientific knowledge, has within the present year passed into the realm of history. Reports from South Africa declare that the last white rhinoceros has been killed, and that its skeleton, hide, and horn are now being shipped to England to enrich the Natural History Museum. Thus the largest of modern quadrupeds, excepting the elephant, becomes extinct, along with the beautiful quagga, the dodo, the great auk, and other noteworthy members of the animal kingdom which have vanished from the world before the rapacity of man.

HOW A RUBBER FOREST LOOKS.

According to recent accounts of the reckless manner in which forests of rubber trees are destroyed, India rubber will soon be much more scarce and costly than it now is, and when that happens it is probable that some one will invent a substitute. At present, however, it is interesting to know what a recent traveler says of the India-rubber forests of Nicaragua:

"A forest of them may be detected without the eyes of an expert, for they are scarred and dying from the wounds of the machete, the big knife used by the natives. The ordinary specimen of Nicaragua is from fifty to one hundred feet high, and about two feet in diameter.

"The bark is white, and the leaves are oval, with a slight inclination downward. The cuts are made about two feet apart, and usually extend from the ground to the first branch, channels being scored in the sides to lead the juice into a bag. The average yield of a tree is from five to seven gallons of milky fluid.

"This is mixed with the juice of the 'wisth,' which hastens congelation. After this operation the crude rubber is baled up and shipped north, to be refined and further prepared for commerce. Another tree, very similar to the rubber, and often mistaken for it, is the cow tree. This yields a liquid very much like milk in taste and appearance."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Renew War Idyll After Fifty Years.

A romance of Civil War times will reach its climax in Richmond, Va., when Miss Gillie Cary, once one of the belles of Richmond, becomes the bride of Colonel W. Gordon McCabe, former headmaster of McCabe's University School, who for some time past has been devoting his time to literary pursuits, writing for English and American magazines.

Sweethearts during the stirring days of 1861-'65, when McCabe was a dashing young officer in Lee's army, the two are said to have been parted by a trivial lovers' quarrel. The colonel, after the war, married Miss Virginia Osborne, of Petersburg, where he established his school and made it one of the best in the South, educating many young men who have since risen high. In 1895 he moved the school to Richmond, and seven years later retired from active work. In 1912 he lost his wife.

Not many months ago Miss Cary, who had remained true to her first love, was rummaging among old papers, when she came upon a batch of poems that the young officer of war days had written to her. Soon afterward she met him and the old flame was fanned to new life. The colonel once more became a suitor.

Now they are planning to spend their honeymoon in Charleston, S. C., where one of the colonel's sons is head of a large cotton firm.

Empress' Friend Dies in Poverty.

Countess Jeanne Demadre, once belle of European courts, convent mate, and friend of Princess Eugenie, who later became wife of Napoleon III., died recently in a humble cottage in a secluded spot in South Bend, Ind. Few knew her, and none of her acquaintances realized that half a century ago she was considered a world beauty and the associate of the crowned heads of Europe.

A brief twelve-line obituary chronicled the death of the woman, giving her name as Mrs. Peter Veuve and her age as eighty-three. Her only surviving relative is her heartbroken husband.

The countess was born the daughter of Count Hippolyte Henri Demadre Desoursins, June 24, 1831, in the mansion opposite the Royal Palace in Brussels, according to the register of the Royal Church, in Brussels.

She was sent to a French convent, and there she became a friend of Princess Eugenie, who was destined later to become the wife of Napoleon III.

She left the convent when she was eighteen years old, and when she was nineteen she became the wife of a Frenchman named Baudin.

Her presentation at the court of Belgium took place shortly after she left the convent, and after her school friend Eugenie became the queen of Napoleon III., she was presented at the French court and later at the court of Queen Victoria.

She invested a fortune in De Lesseps' Panama Canal scheme after her husband died, and later she opened a toilet shop in Paris, and, by catering to royalty, amassed another fortune. During the Franco-Prussian War, she became a nurse and was decorated with a gold medal.

Her son met with an accident in New York, and his mother came to the United States to be with him when he died. She later married Peter Veuve, a Swiss. The latter made unwise investments, and twelve years ago, practically penniless, the couple came to South Bend.

How a Popular Preacher's Mind Worked.

How does a great preacher's mind work? Insight into this mystery is gained from the letters of the Reverend Frederick Robertson, a popular preacher at Brighton, England.

He died before he was forty, of brain disease brought on by overwork, broken down by the nervous strain of preaching.

Robertson wasted his strength very often in small controversies, such as Sunday observance, and the unfortunate fact that he had no sense of humor often led him to take seriously and regret childishly, and answer bitterly, criticisms which were not worth thinking about and critics wholly unworthy of his steel.

Robertson himself knew that certain serious defects of character are almost inseparable from the preacher's office.

"I wish I did not hate preaching so much," he wrote one day; "the degradation of being a Brighton preacher is at times almost intolerable," and, again he regrets that he has weakened his nervous system by "stump oratory."

Preaching always excited him, and a sermon would leave him for days too much agitated to work. He doubted often if he ought not to give it up—for the sake of his spirit—though he would not attend to his doctor's advice and give it up for the sake of his body.

Blameless as was his life, and fruitful as were his exhortations, he could not escape the minor dangers which the pulpit shares with the stage. He grew sensitive and self-centered, he came to need the stimulus of a crowd moved to emotion.

Close as were his intimacies and wide as were his benevolences, the circle of his affections was latterly narrow, indeed. Yet he hated excitement as much as he craved it. He wrote:

"I am persuaded there are few things morally so bad as excitement of the nerves in any way; nothing—to borrow a military word and use it in a military sense—nothing demoralizes so much as excitement. It destroys the tone of the heart; leaves an exhaustion which craves stimulus, and utterly unfits for duty. High-wrought feeling must end in wickedness; a life of excitement is inseparable from a life of vice. The opera, the stage, the ballroom, French literature, and irregular life—what must they terminate in?"

What Men Grind Their Axes On.

Not many people realize that there is a special sort of whetstone for nearly every purpose. The proper sharpening stones or abrasives for use in various professions and trades and in household work are exhibited in the division of mineral technology in the older building of the United States National Museum, at Washington, D. C.

The exhibit shows specimens of the crude and partially prepared stones and the finished products ready for use, as well as a series of photographs which illustrate the operations of mining and preparing them.

Probably the first stone used for abrasive purposes was sandstone, a very widely distributed rock, and it is still used to-day. Its coarse grit and even grain first attracted attention, while the rough edge that it gave was all that was then required.

With the progress of the arts there began a search for various stones which could be used for sharpening objects of different sorts, so that to-day, not only sandstones, but mica schists, slates, and emery stones are used, besides several artificial compounds.

The hard, white, compact sandstones found near Hot Springs, Arkansas, are among the best whetstones known, equaling, if not surpassing, the Turkey stone, which for years has been considered one of the best. This Arkansas stone is known as novaculite, and occurs in two or three grades, intended for use with certain tools.

The hard, flintlike stone should be used only to sharpen instruments made of the very best steel, requiring very keen edges and points, such as those used by surgeons, dentists, and jewelers.

The other grades, although composed of the same ingredients, are more porous, the sand grains are not as close together, and a rougher edge is given to the sharpened tool. Because of their more porous nature, these stones cut faster, proving suitable for the finer-edged tools of carpenters, machinists, and engravers, and for honing razors.

Indiana and Ohio supply a whetstone made from a sandstone of a coarser grain than the novaculite of Arkansas, but nevertheless quite uniform. It may be used with either oil or water, and is useful for sharpening household cutlery, penknives, or ordinary carpenters' tools. But since it is easily cut and grooved by hard and sharp steel, the fine instruments of dentists and surgeons should not be edged or pointed on this stone.

Scythe stones and mowing machine stones are practically all made from mica-schist rock found in New Hampshire and Vermont. These rocks are generally of a dark-gray color, and composed of very thin sheets of mica and quartz crystals interlaminated.

A simple experiment made about fifteen years ago led to the discovery of carborundum and crystolon. By heating a mixture of salt, sand, and sawdust, and powdered coke in an electric furnace, the variegated colored crystals of carborundum and crystolon were produced.

These crystals are extremely hard, cutting glass easily, and, in fact, almost any substance except the diamond.

Emery cloth and paper are very well-known commodities, but are little used to-day because the artificial abrasives are just as effective and cheaper. Experiments to obtain an artificial product having the main characteristics of emery resulted in the making of alundom and aloxite, both of which are shown in the museum series.

High and Low California.

California, with an area of 158,000 square miles, is the second largest State in the Union. It exhibits wide geographic diversity, for it includes the lowest area in the United States—Death Valley, 276 feet below sea level—and the highest—Mount Whitney, 14,501 feet above the sea.

Similarly there is a great diversity in scenic effects, climate, and vegetation. Records obtained at meteorologic stations in the Salton Sink indicate a maximum temperature of 130 degrees in the shade, the highest recorded within the continental United States, while it is probable that minimum temperature on the higher peaks, like Mount Whitney and Mount Shasta, approach the minimum within our boundaries, a total difference of nearly 200 degrees.

Records of rainfall in the most arid sections of the southern deserts of the State represent the extreme of aridity in the United States, showing an annual average of less than three inches and periods of twelve months or more, with only traces of rain, whereas the precipitation in northwestern California is very heavy, an annual average of close to one hundred inches being recorded at a few stations in Mendocino and Del Norte Counties.

The Boxing Bear.

"Learn how to box! Latest tricks of the ring taught! Exhibitions of shadow boxing with all the swings, jabs, and hooks daily! Reasonable fees—honey, apples, and all kinds of sweets accepted in unlimited quantities, honey preferred. Professor Zip, Studio, Central Park."

"Bill" Snyder, head keeper of the Central Park Zoological Gardens, New York, N. Y., is the manager of Professor Zip, while James Coyle, who looks after the bear pen, is the active assistant of the professor. He has to think quickly and act quickly, for professor knows all the fine points of the boxing game, and when the keeper faces him for his training bout every day, he has to be on the alert. The professor knows the swings and jabs and can sidestep and dodge with the best of the ring artists.

Boxing is not the professor's only accomplishment. He is "some" dancer, too, and plays his own music, furnishing original bear tunes for each lesson, playing it himself and composing as the dance proceeds. You don't often find a boxing teacher who invents new dance steps and hops, composes music, and plays it, too.

Zip does all these things, and, besides, has tricks galore. For a nice red apple he'll give an exhibition of shadow boxing that would shame any star of the ring. For a bit of candy he'll turn somersaults and do all sorts of gymnastics, but when honey is handed to him, he is in his element, and that is the time he plays his bear tunes and steps off in a way that the best tango "bug" would envy.

Zip can be seen any day doing his "stunts" in the bear pen at the Central Park menagerie. He is a small, black-brown sloth bear, a new arrival at the park, for he has been there little more than a month, but in that time he has won more friends than any other animal in Bill Snyder's collection. He is particularly popular with the children, who flock to his pen every afternoon to watch him dance and box with "Jimmie" Coyle. One particular friend of Zip is a young woman who visits the bear pen every afternoon with a supply of honey. Once he gets a taste of that, Zip goes through all his tricks. He plays the harmonica, dances, does gymnastic stunts, and then jerks "Buster," his companion, to his feet and proceeds to knock him all around the ring. For Buster is a novice at the boxing game. Buster never could box until Zip came. Then, when he found that Zip got all the "sweets," Buster became jealous, and one day tried to beat Zip at his own game. But Buster is too old to learn.

He can't get any music out of the harmonica on which Zip composes his dance music, and as for boxing, Zip just uses him for a punching bag.

When Jimmie Coyle found that Zip was a boxer, he, having ambitions in that line himself, went after the bear in true ring fashion, but Zip knew too many tricks, and, after giving Coyle a good pummelling the first two or three days, to show him how little he knew about the game, he permitted him to act as his trainer, so that every day the keeper and the bear have a few rounds in the pen, while Buster looks on and watches for pointers.

Zip was presented to the menagerie by Charles B. Knox, of Jamestown, N. Y. Mr. Knox got the bear when he was a cub, and in the next few months he became a great pet of the family. He used to ride with Mr. Knox on the front seat of his automobile and learned lots of tricks. Mr. Knox also had a big Newfoundland dog, "Jack," and he and Zip became great chums; in fact, it is said that Zip learned all his dance steps from Jack, for they were often seen dancing together at Mr. Knox's home. Finally, however, Zip became too big for a house-hold pet, and it was feared that he might get too mischievous, so Mr. Knox offered him to Bill Snyder, who just then was looking for a bear to take the place of Buster's mate, who died about six weeks ago. So Zip was shipped down to Central Park, and there he was in his element at once, for all the kiddies who know every animal in the park made friends with him and brought him good things to eat as soon as they saw he could do so many tricks.

Bits of Information.

Mining experts in the Philippines agree that a steady increase in the gold production of the islands may be expected for an indefinite period.

It is possible for the human car to distinguish sounds over a range of about eleven octaves, but only seven and one-third octaves are used in music.

After twelve years of experimenting, a Dresden engineer has succeeded in perfecting a rocket carrying a camera to photograph objects and places over which it passes, being returned to the ground by a parachute.

Several of the most common diseases, including typhoid and arthritis, have been practically banished from the United States navy by the use of distilled water for cooking as well as drinking.

Italian canners are now utilizing the skins and seeds of tomatoes, the former for stock feed and the latter for oil, in its crude form, for soap and illumination, and, when refined, for table use.

A project for draining and reclaiming 1,000,000 acres of land in Egypt, work upon which has been begun, is one of the greatest and most expensive tasks of the kind ever attempted.

A new automobile convenience is a wind or light shield for one person that can be mounted at any angle by rods connected to the steering post.

For public places there has been invented a drinking fountain that dispenses ordinary water free and ice water when a coin is dropped in a slot.

An observatory at Berlin holds the world's most accurate clock, which is kept in an airtight glass cylinder in the basement of the building.

An old idea in the history of telephony has been revived by a British inventor, who has patented a transmitter shaped like the human ear.

A simple wire loop to be fastened to a doorjamb and locked around the necks of two milk bottles to prevent their theft has been patented.

A telescope with two parallel barrels, to permit two persons to see the same object at the same time, has been invented by a Swiss optician.

An ingenious tool has been invented to enable jewelers to remove stones from settings quickly and without injury to either stone or setting.

So that wheelbarrows can be used over snow and ice, a Wisconsin inventor has patented a runner attachment.

A new sled that can be steered has three runners, the odd one being in front, where it is controlled by a handle.

Peruvian petroleum is said to rank next to that of Russia in its suitability for producing high-grade lubricants.

With but three horses to each 100 residents, Switzerland has the smallest equine population of any nation.

The head of a new thumb tack is a clip to hold paper without puncturing it.

There were 1,220 accidents, causing 1,753 deaths, in British coal mines last year.

Powdered borax sprinkled on a garbage can or refuse pile will drive away flies.

In Our Great Melting Pot.

Nearly seven million white, foreign-born males over the age of twenty-one years are now in the United States. About 400,000 of these are English and 600,000 Irish, the total from the United Kingdom being about 1,300,000.

There are less than 60,000 French, about 800,000 Russians, and 1,300,000 Germans.

Of the English, sixty per cent are naturalized American citizens; of the Irish, about sixty-nine per cent; of the French, fifty per cent, and of the Russians, twenty-six per cent.

Of the Germans, about seventy per cent are naturalized Americans, showing a more marked and more permanent absorption into the life of their adopted country than is the case with the other nationalities.

Woman Ventriloquist's Joke.

Miss Elaine Thompson, of Maplewood, N. J., is an amateur ventriloquist. Yesterday, on a street car, she frightened two Newark women into a faint by making a noise like a dog yelping under the car. The lines was blockaded and the car jacked up before it was discovered that Miss Thompson was just having a little joke.

Minister Upholds Fox Trot.

Fox trotting and other modern dances are proper amusement for young people, according to Reverend Allen A. Stockdale, pastor of the First Congregational Church, a meeting place for many of Toledo's wealthiest families.

The assertion of the pastor came in response to the question if dancing had been indulged in at the church. Doctor Stockdale admitted that members of the church had danced.

Fish Schools Choke Harbor.

The city of Prince Rupert, B. C., Pacific coast terminal of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, has once more witnessed the yearly recurring phenomenon of having its large harbor so densely packed with huge schools of herring as to make the progress of rowboats a difficult

matter. This year's schools were exceptionally large, and so dense that the immense body of fish seemed like one solid moving mass. Men and boys on the G. T. P. docks hauled in literally millions of these fish in buckets, wire waste-paper baskets, and almost any utensil that was handy.

Some of these herrings were taken by the fish companies and frozen in boxes for use as bait in fishing for halibut. They are an excellent table fish, but so far comparatively few of them are being shipped, although several inland cities have made inquiries. Fishermen say that the herring took sheltered bays to escape the whales which prey on them in certain localities in the Pacific during their migrations.

Cougars Tame in Captivity.

Two cougars, trapped more than a year ago in a river cañon by A. J. Holman, of Mondovi, Wash., have been reduced to such docile temper that for many months their captor has daily entered the crib in which they are kept.

Tricks of a Two-legged Cat.

J. A. Hart, who lives about six miles south of Eureka, Kan., has a freak of nature in the shape of a two-legged kitten that walks, jumps, and frisks about like any normal kitten. The kitten is now about three months old, is plump and well grown, and appears to be a normal, healthy kitten in every respect except that it hasn't the vestige of a hip bone or hind legs, and, what is more strange, it does not seem to feel the need of another pair of legs and feet any more than a duck or any other biped.

It walks about on the two front feet with easy, graceful equipoise, waving its tail over its back. When it pauses, it sits down naturally, and the casual observer might not notice the absence of the hind legs and feet. One mate to this kitten is normal in every respect, but another one of the same litter lacked the hip bones and hind legs. This kitten was growing nicely, but was accidentally caught in a trap and died from the injuries. Had it lived, the two would have made a strange pair of kittens.

Facts About the Human Eye.

People of melancholic temperament rarely have clear blue eyes.

The chameleon is almost the only reptile provided with an eyelid.

Eyes with long, sharp corners indicate great discernment and penetration.

Unsteady eyes, rapidly jerking from side to side, are frequently indicative of an unsettled mind.

It is said that the prevailing colors of eyes among patients of lunatic asylums are brown and black.

Eyes placed close together in the head are said to indicate pettiness of disposition, jealousy, and a turn for fault finding.

All men of genius are said to have eyes clear, slow moving, and bright. This is the eye which indicates mental ability of some kind—it does not matter what.

One Horse Power Per Second.

To lift 550 pounds one foot in one second requires what is known as one horse power. Similarly, a horse power is able to raise twice that weight one foot in twice the time or one-half foot in just that time. Moreover, it can raise half 550 pounds one foot in half a second, or two feet in a second, and so on. Therefore, when we lift one-fourth of that weight, 137½ pounds, four feet in one second, we are exerting a horse power.

Accordingly, when a person who weighs 137½ pounds runs upstairs at the rate of four feet a second, he is exerting the equivalent of a horse power. For a man weighing twice that much, 275 pounds, it would be necessary to climb at the rate of only two feet a second to exert a horse power. It is possible to do much more.

As a matter of fact, a horse often exerts many times a horse power. The average horse can draw a wagon up a hill where a ten-horse power engine with the same load would fail. A horse power does not represent the greatest momentary strength of the average horse, but is a measure of the power which he can exert continuously.

Dream of Wealth Comes True.

To be a poor little girl with the poor little girl's dream of some day becoming a princess with untold wealth and then to suddenly find that the wealthy part of the dream has come true, is the experience of fifteen-year-old Josephine Romano, of Boston, Mass.

Josephine's dream of wealth came true when she was awarded $16,000 by a jury for injuries sustained several years ago when she was hit and tripped by a live wire which was dangling from one of the Boston elevated poles. She was so severely burned about the head, face, and hands that the marks will remain on her body for life.

"It is so much money that I don't know what to do with it," she said. "I think I'll put it in the bank and then be a real lady."

Spain Faces Hunger Peril.

The economic situation in Spain is becoming steadily more serious, notwithstanding the efforts of the government to find a solution for the difficulties which confront the country. It is feared that conditions will soon become so bad that they may lead to a conflict fraught with grave consequences.

Dispatches from the provinces tell of numerous riots resulting from the high cost of food. In some interior districts and in the Canary Islands the people get food only every other day. Many families are said to be living on herbs and roots. A woman said to have been driven mad by privation, drowned herself with her children at Lazaretos.

Fierce rioting resulted at Lacele from the increased price of bread. The civil guards are reported to have fired into the crowd, killing one and wounding many.

Hen Egg Like a Goose Egg.

Miss Alma Brewer, of Como, Miss., is proudly exhibiting a common hen's egg which she recently found in a nest which measures six and three-fourth inches around and seven and five-eighths inches the long way.

Russian Pillager is Hanged.

A more favorable view of the discipline in the Russian army in Galicia than prevailed during the autumn invasion of East Prussia is given by Leonhard Adelt, the war correspondent of the *Tageblatt*, who recently visited Neu-Sandec, on the Dunajec River, a short time after it had been evacuated by the Russian army.

At the corner of one street he saw a hook fastened to

the wall, from which, as he was informed by the citizens, the Russians had hanged one of their soldiers for plundering. There was still visible on the adjacent wall the following inscription:

"The czar sent out soldiers, not pillagers, to fight for him."

Adelt goes on to say that the Russians maintained strict discipline in the city. As further examples of their stringency, he mentions that one soldier who stole a ham was given fifty strokes with the knout, while another, who strayed into the quarters of other soldiers and made undue noise there, got thirty strokes.

In Bukowina the Russians demonstrated the sincerity of their newly acquired temperance principles by emptying all strong liquors into the gutters.

Prisoner Dies from Wounds.

The German prisoner who was shot through the lungs some time ago by a sentry while trying to escape from the internment camp near Kingston, Jamaica, is dead from his wounds. He persisted in stoning the guard who shot him. Since this affair, no other attempts to escape have been made.

How Many Auto Tires We Use.

In round numbers there are now 1,600,000 automobiles in the country, and not one of them can possibly get along with less than four tires a year. The most conservative estimate must place the number per car at six tires a year. This would be 9,600,000 tires. In addition, there are scheduled for manufacture during 1915 not less than 600,000 new cars, which must be fitted with at least 2,400,000 new tires, making a total of at least 12,000,000 tires. In reality, the number is much greater, even though a million or more tires are "retreaded," fitted with "covers," et cetera. Taxicabs and some of the high-powered converted racing cars could not possibly get along with less than twenty tires a year. The money spent for tires in 1914 in the United States alone probably exceeded $200,000,000.

London Will Retain German Street Names.

The London County Council is not encouraging the changing of German street names. Despite the fact that the borough council of Stoke Newington requested that Wiesbaden Road should be renamed Beatty Road, after the naval hero, the local government committee, in a report that will be submitted to-day, says it is not satisfied that a sufficient cause for alteration has been made out.

Recently the county council decided to take no action with regard to renaming Berlin Road Gatford Road. Suggestions have been made by many citizens to change the names of Hanover Square and St. Petersburg Place.

Big Ancient Statue is Found.

Libya, in Africa, again has given an ancient piece of sculpture to the world. At Cyrene, once the principal city of ancient Cyrenaica, a colossal statue of Alexander the Great, lacking only a part of the right forearm, has been excavated. It is a magnificent marble copy of the celebrated bronze of Alexander by Lysippus, which is known only by the copies of it on coins, the original having been destroyed.

The statue probably was made fifty or sixty years after the original, in the third or fourth century before Christ. It is larger than life and represents Alexander, entirely nude, standing, looking upward, with his right arm outstretched and his left holding a spear, on which he is leaning.

Boy Scouts Paid More than Middies.

Boy scouts are now engaged in the navy of Great Britain for signaling and are receiving more pay than midshipmen. More than 12,000 scouts have entered military service of one kind or another, and 2,000 more who are nearing the age of enlistment are in training.

At the outbreak of the war the scouts by thousands guarded telegraphs, telephones, and bridges, served as messengers, and performed countless duties of value to the war office and the admiralty. More than 5,000 medals have been given to scouts who performed not less than twenty-eight days of service. About 50,000 boys have served a fewer number of days.

The sea branch of the movement volunteered to carry out the duties of the coast guardsmen recalled to the fleet, and they were detailed to duties on the east coast. This required more boys than this branch could supply, and the land scouts joined, and now 1,600 boys are so employed in patrols of eight, under their own leaders and with their own equipment.

Catch White-and-black Rat.

The colored porter at H. T. Whitfield's billiard room, in Murfreesboro, Tenn., captured a freak rat. The rodent's head and front part of its body is pure black, while the other half is snow white, excepting a black line running along the center of its back to the tail. The rat is still in captivity, and the owner has been offered ten dollars for it. When caught, it was very vicious and made several attempts to bite its captor.

Three-mouthed Calf Born.

Will Pline, a farmer living five miles from Lebanon, Mo., was surprised on finding that one of his newborn calves has three mouths, and was as spry as any calf in his herd.

The mouths are all on the front of the animal's head, one being up between the horns and another just below that, and the third a little lower down.

Mr. Pline feeds the calf milk, which it seems to relish as any ordinary calf. It seems as though the animal will live, for when any one enters the lot where it is kept, it will run and play as though it felt healthy and strong.

Tells of Cat-and-dog Wedding.

A cat and a dog can be friendly—aye, even more. The old argument was settled here with a statement from Reverend Father Bernard of the Fort Yates Catholic Church, of Fort Yates, N. D., that he had just married Miss Rose High Cat to Harry Poor Dog. They are Sioux Indians.

Sends Forest to Fair.

To accommodate visitors at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, the Southern Pacific Railway Company has constructed a building, 200 feet square and in classic style, standing between the west portal of the Zone and the Machinery Palace.

The structure has a cozy rest room for women, with a nurse in charge, and is furnished with writing desks,

easy-chairs, and newspapers from all parts of the United States. There is a similar room for men.

The entrance leads through the heart of a California big tree. The whole inclosure is a miniature woodland, with trails winding among the trees. Through this woodland a path leads to the offices of the company, where a squad of information clerks are ready to answer all questions.

Opening out of the ticket office is Sunset Theater, a replica of The Little Theater, in New York City, where stereopticon scenes and motion pictures are presented. The company has engaged lecturers, and their talks are interspersed with musical selections rendered on the great Kimball pipe organ.

It's Fish, Snake, or Lizard.

A strange creature, presenting anatomical characteristics which might be attributed to fish, snake, or lizard, has been placed on exhibition in a business house in Bicknell, Ind. No one has found a name that seems to fit the animal, or reptile, which was caught by Grant Hooper and Carl York, fishermen.

The body of the creature is twelve inches long, and in shape resembles the old-fashioned four-cornered dart kite. The head, in form, is like a snake's, but the resemblance ends there, for four sharp tusks protrude from the mouth. Apparently the creature breathes through gills similar to those of a fish. The horns and ears, which follow closely the forms of the human ear, give a peculiar appearance to the head. The skin or hide is black and white in color.

Big Gun Crumples Car.

So heavy is a great fourteen-inch gun just completed, to guard New York City from hostile attack, that it broke down one of the two flat cars conveying it along the West Shore Railroad, near Cornwall, on its way to Sandy Hook, to be mounted.

It is said to be the most powerful fourteen-inch gun ever made. It was on its way from Watervliet Arsenal when the journal of one of the cars, overtaxed by its excessive weight, wore out and had to be replaced. The gun extends almost the length of the two cars, the breech resting on the rear one.

Old Man Hangs Up a Walking Record.

Becoming peeved over the fact that the Big Four Railroad did not have a train scheduled to leave at a time when he desired to return to his home, Benjamin Yentzer hung up a walking record for one of his age. Although eighty-seven, he walked from Tiffin to Adrian, Ohio, twelve miles, and made the journey in two hours. He was feeling fine at the end of the walk, too.

Cover Held on Kettle.

Much of the flavor and other virtues of meat and vegetables are lost while undergoing the cooking operation, being carried away in the escaping vapor and heat. In a recently invented kettle, a lid is sealed on under pressure. This prevents the escape of steam and facilitates the cooking process. It is claimed that not only is the cooking done in much shorter time, but that foods prepared in this manner have a more delicate flavor. The lid is held in place by means of a lever which is easily manipulated. In order to prevent the possibility of an explosion when the kettle is on the stove, the lid is fitted with automatic safety valve which permits the steam to blow off when the pressure approaches the danger point.

Passes Her 106 Birthday.

Still enjoying good health at the great age of 106 years, Mrs. Abigail Morrill passed another milestone, and has the distinction of being the oldest person in Newburyport, Mass.

Mrs. Morrill was born on a farm in West Newbury in 1809, and has lived in this vicinity all her life. She has for several years resided with her daughter, Mrs. Abby Morrill Oliver.

She is the mother of ten children, three of whom are now living; Mrs. Oliver, of this city, Louis Morrill, of West Newbury, and George Morrill, of Lynn, the two sons being survivors of the Civil War.

Her husband was the late Jacob Morrill, of this city, to whom she was married May 4, 1835. There are eleven grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Except for being slightly hard of hearing, Mrs. Morrill has her faculties well preserved.

Stove in Shaving Mug.

The newest shaving mug is equipped with a little alcohol lamp. So little water is required that it takes but a short time to heat it to the boiling temperature. The invention is one that will be appreciated by traveling men especially, as the mug is not much larger than the ordinary kind, and is, of course, much easier to carry about than shaving outfits. In fact, it seems odd that the invention was not thought of before. The interior of the cup is of a substance not injured by heat, and the lamp is lighted from the bottom. Hot water may thus be obtained at any time in a few seconds.

Sneezed Out a War Souvenir.

After carrying a bullet in his head for nearly fifty years, or ever since the battle of Gettysburg, Calvin Cook, a Confederate soldier living in Catawba County, N. C., has sneezed from his nose a leaden pellet commonly called "buckshot." He was wounded in the head at Gettysburg and eventually recovered from the wound, only to be troubled many years by what was designated as some sort of growth in his nasal passages. During a recent sneezing fit he "blew" his nose with uncommon vigor, and out rolled his souvenir of the greatest battle of the Civil War. His nasal trouble vanished when the "growth" rolled out.

Tobacco Habit Easily Conquered

A New Yorker of wide experience, has written a book telling how the tobacco or snuff habit may be easily and completely banished in three days with delightful benefit. The author, Edward J. Woods, 230 G, Station E, New York City, will mail his book free on request.

The health improves wonderfully after the nicotine poison is out of the system. Calmness, tranquil sleep, clear eyes, normal appetite, good digestion, manly vigor, strong memory and a general gain in efficiency are among the many benefits reported. Get rid of that nervous feeling; no more need of pipe, cigar, cigarette, snuff or chewing tobacco to pacify morbid desire.

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